

BLUNT INSTRUMENTS

Nr. 3

CIRCULATION: 62

FEBRUARY 27TH, 1987

Some (but not many) of you have asked me how I came up with the name *Blunt Instruments*. To tell you the truth, I was originally going to call this 'zine *Rzeczpospolita*, which is Polish for "The Republic." Besides being (as far as I'm concerned, anyway) a nice Polish name with appropriate historical connotations, it would yield, when abbreviated (as all 'zine titles are) to *Rzecz*, a wonderful pun ("The Thing"). Unfortunately, I eventually decided that any pleasure I derived from these private jokes of mine would be immediately cancelled out by the fact that no one would be able to pronounce it. Consequently, I had to settle for *BI*, which was the name of a small set of game reports which I printed while running an intra-university game here last year. However, I may yet use the name for a subzine which I just *might* talk a friend of mine from Poland (who now resides in Canada) into doing. Even if I don't, though, I don't want to see anyone stealing this idea, so unless you would like to answer some questions for several hours in the company of a few nice secret police gentlemen that I just happen to know, you should follow my advice and let me keep the rights.

This issue of *BI* is dedicated to the memory of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, and to all those brave men and women who gave either their lives or their careers in what has to be one of the saddest, most tragic chapters in the history of postwar Europe. As you all probably know (or found out through the media hype last fall), last year was the thirtieth anniversary of that event. I was made even more acutely aware of this fact when I recalled the anxiety and tension as my family and I followed the events in Poland in 1980-1, convinced that our country would become the third Soviet Bloc nation to be suppressed in the past three decades. Fortunately, despite our worst fears to the contrary, we were spared another bloodletting; despite the unhappy and abrupt end to the limited Polish freedoms won during that short, euphoric period, martial law didn't require the use of Soviet force, and for that I will be eternally grateful. This year, as Europe suffers through one of the most severe winters in recent memory, I think more and more about a nation that was forced to endure an agony that most Westerners would find impossible to comprehend. Although it may seem just another in a long list of mankind's tragedies, I hope that it, along with many others, is never, never forgotten.

In keeping with this dedication, I have written a short piece on the Uprising which may interest those of you who aren't completely aware of the circumstances surrounding it. I may expand it with another article in a future issue focusing on the progress of the "Hungarian experiment" into the Kádár period, but we'll see.

On a completely different note, I want to say again that I am going to be running a *Civilization* game as soon as I have enough players. I may have hidden the opening announcement away last time, which is why the game isn't filled yet (though we only need two more players). The rules and map are in this issue to give prospective players a better idea of how it will be run. This isn't the first issue anymore, and I no longer need gimmicks to attract players, so there *will* be a game fee. Very low, though. Turn the page and find out.

Blunt Instruments is a compilation of the backwards Satanic messages on various rock albums, themselves played backwards to produce a Diplomacy journal. Its publisher and editor is a young intellectual snob named Bruce Geryk, residing at 5748 S. Blackstone Ave. #206, Chicago, Illinois, 60637. His telephone number is (312) 324-6460, and he always appreciates calls to tell him how wonderful his 'zine is. Subscriptions are \$1.10 for single issues, or \$10 for ten. Residents of countries other than the United States receive two free issues upon subscribing for ten. There is no extra charge for airmail delivery. Diplomacy is a trademark of the Avalon Hill Game Company, which makes a much better game called Squad Leader, so I advise all of you to go out and buy it immediately to avoid being stuck in "adventure gaming" obsolescence. I mean that.

the arena

Things seem to be going swimmingly, which makes for a very happy editor/GM. There was some immediate interest in the *Civilization* game, but not as much as I had expected, perhaps because in the last issue I buried the game announcement in the middle of this page. Very well. Please take note of the fact that I have indeed opened a *Civilization* game, and that there are still two openings left. At present, I have Fred Chang, Brian Kegerreis, Claude Morest, and Marc Peters signed up, although Brian and Marc still have to pay. For the low, low gamefee of \$5.00, you can have the privilege of playing against these fine gentlemen.

Included in this issue are both the rules and the map, which I hope will give everyone a good idea of how this game is going to be run. I have my doubts about a few points, though, so I reserve the right to alter things as we go along to improve the flow of the game. Your comments are encouraged. Please tell me if you have any observations on the rules regarding their clarity, composition, or even the nice typeface that I put them in.

Some of you have continued to write, requesting that I run a certain game, or open another section of *Diplomacy*. While I appreciate the requests, I am going to have to put a firm hold on any further gamestarts. I have several reasons for this, the primary one being lack of space. I always intended *BI* to be a chat/letter/article 'zine, and this meant a conscious limit on the games I would run. Once games start squeezing reading matter out of here, you will most likely see a rather unhappy editor, and when that happens, some changes will be quickly instituted. Better to avoid that situation now, rather than have difficulties arise later.

Secondly, I really don't have the time to run a lot of games. One of my basic assumptions when I started this venture was that I was going to maintain a standard of reliable GMing, regardless of how long the actual 'zine got. I think I am sticking to this, and I am very wary of anything which will upset this balance. Please understand.

Perhaps my most selfish reason for this, though, is my desire to see some rather unusual games run in *BI*. I firmly intend to run a postal *Awful Green Things* game as soon as I get more time, and I'd like to add a few more offbeat games later, as I have more time. Eventually, if anyone gets the urge to play an unusual game, I'd like *BI* to have something to offer. Mayfair's *ICBM*? Sure. TSR's *Snit's Revenge*? Yup. Also, games like *Titan* and *1830* will be housed here, time permitting. All this without decreasing the reading matter:games ratio. In short, I have plans. Whether or not those plans are realized, though, depends on how I manage the 'zine right now. I hope all you prospective game-players can wait.

The one exception to all of this is *British Rails*. If I can get an imposing set of problems straightened out, I will consider offering a section once the orphan (1985AQ) ends. Those of you who would be interested in this should keep this in mind. In addition to the operational problems, I still have to decide whether to make the game an eight-player monster like the ones in *Trax* and *Loose Caboose*. More probably, we will keep the game to six, though the new (revised) deck constructed by Bruce Linsey will almost certainly be used.

Those who cannot, or would rather not, wait are encouraged to take advantage of the many gamestarts available now that so many new 'zines have entered the market. Some 'zines have had problems filling games, and I would urge you to contact other publishers and see if they have openings left. A few possible places for new gamestarts were listed in the last issue, and there are a few more plugs in this one. Also, those of you who are so inclined can look for a game through *Pontevendria*, which is a listing of game openings and their gamemasters published by Scott Hanson (3508 4th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55408-4511), or Robert Sacks' *Known Game Openings* (4861 Broadway 5-V, New York, NY 10034), which has a self-explanatory title.

FRENCH ENGAGE IN DIPLOMATIC INDECENCIES

1985AQ

The Integral Trees

Winter, 1905

Ger: Builds A MUN, A BER. Ita: Cannot build, plays one short.
Rus: NRR. GM removes A vie, A gal. Tur: Builds A ANK, A CON.

Spring, 1906

FRANCE (*Holley*) A TUS-ven, A mar-PIE, F NAF S F wes-TUN, F NAT H, F tyn-rom (d.r lyo.otb), F mid-WES, F wes-TUN.

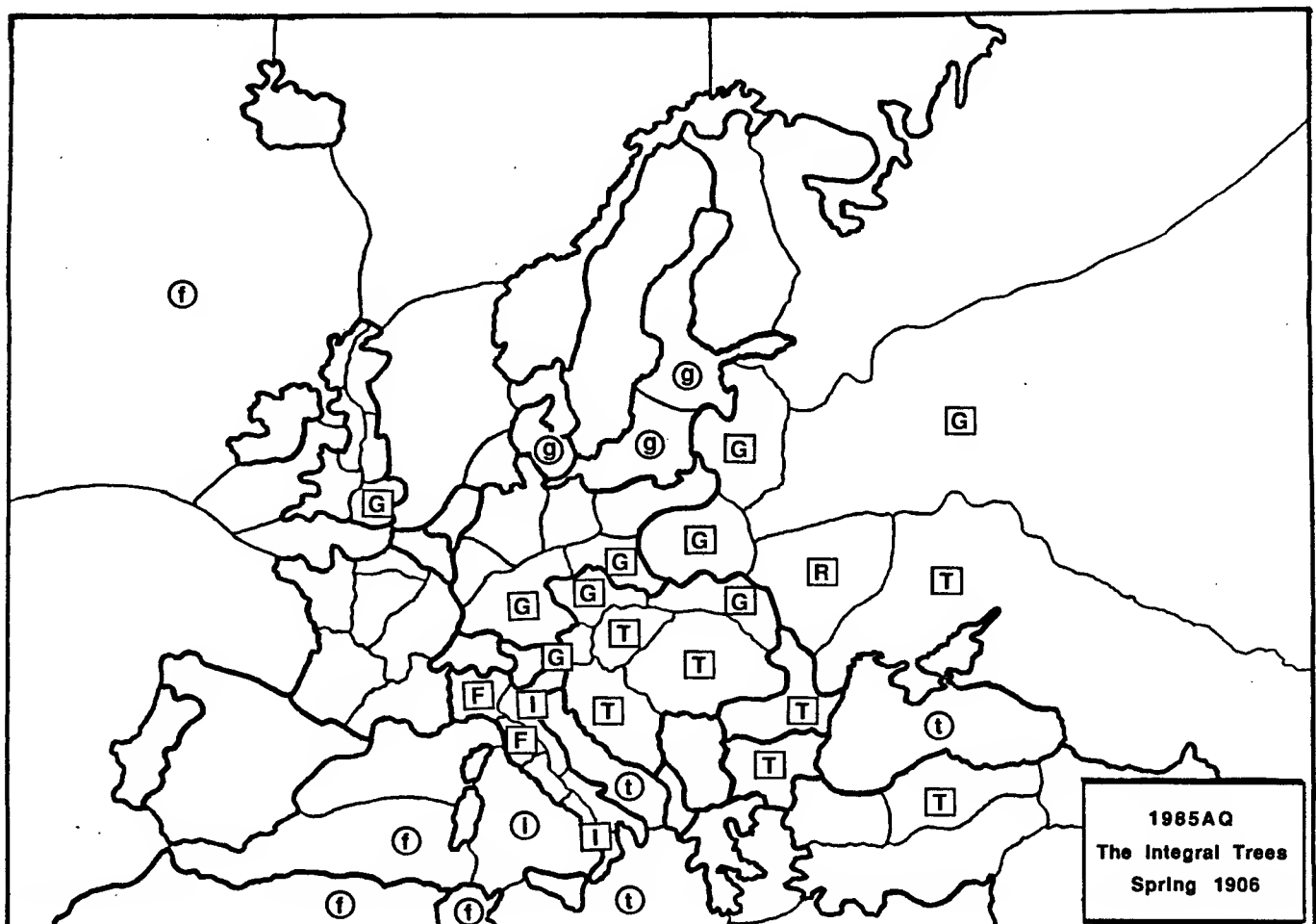
GERMANY (*Hakey*) A LVN S A MOS, A MOS S RUSSIAN A UKR, A WAR S A sil-GAL, A sil-GAL, A ber-SIL, A BOH-vie, A TYO S FRENCH A TUS-ven, A MUN-boh, A LON watches Henry IV. Part II, F stp(sc)-BOT, F BAL hunts for Italian subs, F swe-DEN.

ITALY (*McCrumb*) F rom-TYN, A NAP thumbs its nose at France, A VEN S RUSSIAN A tri-tyo (nsu).

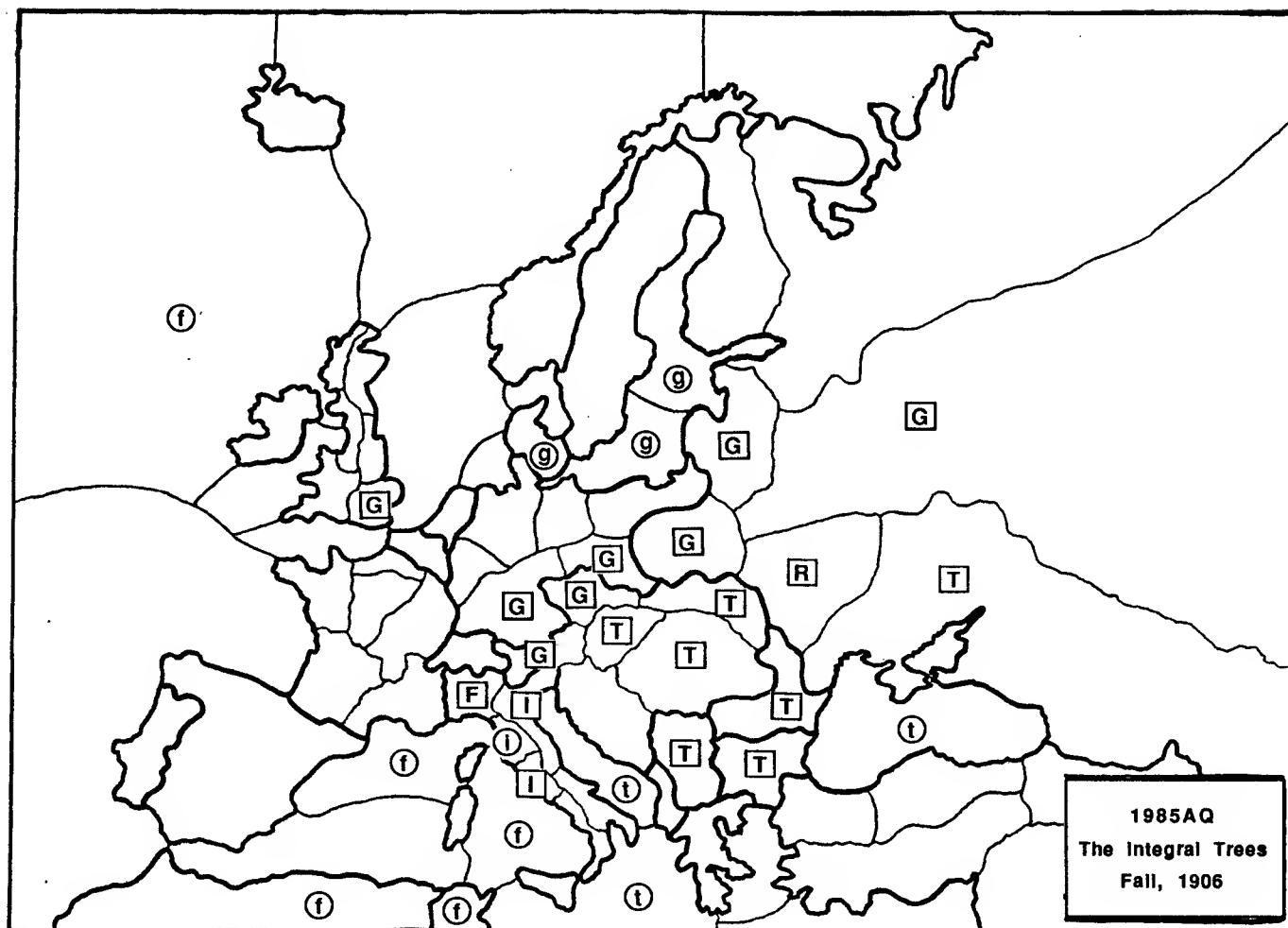
RUSSIA (*Crow drops*) *NMR!* A UKR H.

TURKEY (*Chang*) A bud-VIE, A TRI S A bud-VIE, A ser-BUD, A RUM-ukr, A SEV A S RUM-ukr, A ANK-rum, F BLA C A ANK-rum, A con-BUL, F ION S ITALIAN F rom-TYN, F ADR S ITALIAN A VEN.

Orders for Fall, 1906 are due on **Friday, February 6, 1987 at 2:00 PM Central Daylight Time**. The proposed draw (F-G-T) failed. No other draws are proposed. Russia collapses into permanent civil disorder. Press can be found on the next page.



Constantinople to Paris, Rome, & Berlin: Sorry for not writing.



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1987N/O

Zoliborz/Mokotow

Winter, 1900

In 1987N (Zoliborz), the proposal to have no extension failed, and the game is therefore extended due to player request. 1987O (Mokotow) would have been delayed due to player request even if there had not been an NMR, which there was. Should players in either game wish to change their orders on file, they must get them in by **Friday, February 27th, 1987**. Telephoned orders are due by **2PM Central Daylight Time** on that date. Press has been held until next time.

GAMENOTES—Zoliborz/Mokotow

- Brian Kegerreis' address has changed to 619 S. Cherry, Olathe, KS 66061.
- Gary Coughlan's ZIP Code was incorrectly listed last time—it should have been 38118. *Przepraszam!*
- Ted Davis, 1604 Miles, Kalamazoo, MI 49001 has been asked to stand by for England in 1987O. All pertinent information was included in the flyer.

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Tsk tsk tsk, Bruce—you haven't included your map of Warsaw yet! Well, yeah, I know. Because of the fact that I can now get 85¢ color copies, I hope to be able to provide a readable map in a future issue (the black-and-white attempt turned out to be mostly unreadable. In addition, I might even be persuaded to provide a rudimentary pronunciation guide to Polish, as some of you have complained that you can't even pronounce the name of the game you're in (or, in Jeff Zarse's case, I have had to cringe while my language was slaughtered over the telephone. Ouch!).

A RATHER LENGTHY EDITORIAL

It must be obvious to everyone that this issue of *BI* has been posted rather later than it was originally scheduled to. Although the 'zine was never intended to revolve around the *Diplomacy* deadlines (hence the flyers), I had hoped to keep delays to a minimum. Unfortunately, things don't seem to be working out that way. The last thing I want is for *BI* to become a 'zine which is "regularly late." However, I am unsure of how to achieve this, apart from extending the time between deadlines. I had hoped it would not come to this.

Before there is a hue and cry for refunds from all quarters, I would like to reiterate (or perhaps clarify) my reasons for beginning a 'zine in the first place. As an undergraduate at an extremely rigorous university, I have found more and more that the difficulty of the work I am presented with, its sheer volume, and the particular direction my studies have taken, all combine to slowly eliminate much of the chance that I have to inject creativity into my schoolwork. Perhaps this is a cross that all undergraduates must bear (and it may even be justifiable), but it does tend to turn school into drudgery. Due to my involvement in the hobby, I thought that it would be a good idea to turn some of this excess creative energy into a 'zine, which others might even enjoy reading. Consequently, *BI* was launched, with the emphasis on my own contributions, or at least responses using letters as points of departure on topics of interest.

As *BI* #3 was being completed, I came to the conclusion that while a four-week deadline 'zine is very desirable, it is practically unattainable for this 'zine, heavy as it is with reading material. This publication is simply not something I can produce under those time constraints. My choice, then, is either to drastically reduce the size of the 'zine (to about twelve pages per) or to reduce the frequency.

To cut down on the size of the 'zine, I would have to sharply curtail any discussion in the letter column, eliminate the maps, cut the chat, and basically eliminate all the frills that I so enjoy including. The advantage would be that the 'zine would come out every four weeks, and with the reduced cost of postage and photocopying, my personal subsidy would not be as great. Currently, a thirty-six-page issue of *BI* costs \$3.00 to produce (including envelopes and postage). This makes my subsidy \$2. With reduced costs, I would be able to relieve some of the pressure on my pocketbook.

Unfortunately, I'm afraid that this would do little good, as it doesn't address the main purpose of *BI*, which is to provide a creative outlet for your editor. Twelve-page issues would leave me little room to write once the games were accounted for, and although I might be encouraged (or forced) to eliminate much or all of the chatter and redundancy in which I currently indulge, I would probably feel stifled in the process.

The alternative, of course, is more time between issues. Realistically, I would want to give myself at least six weeks (if not eight, but eight seems rather drastic). This would give me time to put the 'zine together without being rushed and having to skimp on essentials (such as proper proofreading, which was obviously absent in the last issue). While this might decrease the overall enjoyment you get from *BI*, it will at least preserve (I hope) the enjoyment you get from each individual issue.

As a sidenote, I recently read an editorial in Fred Davis, Jr.'s long-running *Bushwacker*, in which Fred, in the process of lamenting that the hobby has lost and is losing a great many high-quality GM's and publishers, states that

It is my personal feeling that one problem is that many of the newer publishers and GM's tried to start right out duplicating the efforts of *Costaguana*, *No Fixed Address*, or (gulp) *Voice of Doom*, with massive professionally printed 'zines. You have to learn to walk before you can fly. Novice editors should be advised that there is nothing wrong with a six- or eight-page 'zine. In the "golden age" of Postal Dip, the average 'zine was probably only about eight pages, and often poorly printed on a ditto machine. Sure, it's great to have 32 pages of offset material, but how many people working for a living or attending college can go on producing 32 to 48 pages a month, year after year? We are all not Conrad von Metzkes or Gary Coughlans.

I may be wrong, but I think that this editorial was referring to *BI*, among others. Fred has run *Bushwacker* successfully for fifteen years, and certainly knows what he is talking about when he gives advice to novice editors, but I think that in directing at least some of this advice at me, Fred missed the mark slightly. First of all, I have absolutely no interest in producing an eight-page 'zine,

assuming that the 'zine would be composed mostly of games. I think you readers have noticed by now that *BI*'s primary function does not consist of providing games to play. While this is certainly a factor, I would be bored stiff publishing a warehouse 'zine. After all, where would I fit all the pretentious material I print right now?

Secondly, I don't think that publishing an eight-page 'zine is a necessary step in learning to publish a larger 'zine. All that a warehouse 'zine can teach a publisher is to be prompt and to adjudicate games accurately. While the latter may be a valuable skill, it isn't necessary *on a large scale* (for, say, six to ten games) if a publisher plans on putting out a large 'zine which de-emphasizes games and emphasizes reading material, and consequently only carries two or three games, to which the publisher/GM can devote a lot of individual time. As for the former skill, if life hasn't taught one to be prompt and dependable, one has no business publishing in the first place.

Thirdly, all of this talk about experience is basically irrelevant, as I don't think that inexperience can actually be the cause of a potentially good GM dropping out of the hobby (aside from the danger of burnout due to inadvertently biting off more than one can chew). As far as I'm concerned, a successful publisher needs three things: time, creativity, and intelligence. By far, I think that the most important one of these is the first. A publisher can accomplish little if he does not have enough time to do what he sets out to do. Furthermore, this can basically be reduced to the question of dedication: if a publisher cares so much about the hobby that he wants to put out a good 'zine, he will, time permitting, assuming he fulfills the three criteria mentioned above. Neither time, nor creativity, nor intelligence can be acquired through experience.

Fred wrote the above within the context of a larger editorial regarding the "state of the hobby," which concerned itself with the decreasing number of gamestarts in North America, so I don't want to sound as if I feel singled out or persecuted. I think, however, that it is important for *BI* readers to understand why the 'zine exists in the first place, and to realize that it is not intended to "mimic" any past or existing publication (although it has certainly been influenced by several). *BI* is big and long because I need it to be big and long. If that means that it comes out less frequently, I can't see any way out of it.

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AS LONG AS I'M TALKING...

Since I've already begun preaching, I guess I might as well touch on a subject that recently has been a topic of discussion in the hobby. Apparently, some attempt is being made by various British hobbyists and a few North American Anglophiles to move our beloved Dipcon across the Atlantic. Simon Billenness has even gone so far as to print a flyer (which he included in the latest *Zine Register*) openly promoting this counter-revolutionary agitation. Simon's plan is to present a British Dipcon bid for 1988. The idea seems innocuous enough, but on closer inspection, I think it is seriously flawed, and might go so far as to engender some bad feelings should it actually succeed.

Simon's claim to legitimacy is that the overseas hobby is experiencing some extraordinary growth, and that hobby members across the Atlantic have too long been deprived of a real opportunity to attend a Dipcon *en masse*. Simon's plan is to make the '88 Dipcon a "global" event. While I sympathise with Simon and the overseas hobby in general, I think that the idea of exporting Dipcon is a trifle ridiculous.

Dipcon is, and always has been, a uniquely North American institution. It has long been considered the "hobby's con," and indeed it is. Dipcon serves as the focal point of the year for the hobby in terms of face-to-face interaction. For a hobby which relies so much on the mails, this sort of get-together is one of the worthiest causes in Dipdom. To take it away would be to deprive the American hobby of its most cherished opportunity to bring itself closer together. Given the problems the hobby has had over the past several years, this is unquestionably a worthy cause.

Despite its name, Dipcon makes no pretense at being the official "Diplomacy" con, thereby implying that all other cons are secondary to it. While this is true of North America, it is certainly not true of the overseas hobby. Due to the unfortunate dictates of geography, I can't really see the two segments of the hobby ever becoming truly "united" in a functional sense. Internationalism is fine, but one shouldn't view one convention as usurping a title which purports to speak for all of Dipdom, on both sides of the Atlantic. There is nothing to prevent the British from establishing their own Dipcon,

and making it the focal point of their con season. I couldn't seriously see anyone in the North American hobby objecting to this. The two hobbies are far enough apart to permit this sort of dualism.

One thing that surprises me is the apparent lack of comprehension on the part of the proponents of this idea of the effects it might have. What if I should organise an attempt (and a successful one, for argument's sake) to move Manorcon or Midcon to the United States? Would the majority of the hobbyists who would have attended the event in the UK still attend in the US? Of course not. Instead, there would probably be some sort of alternative con offered in the UK for those who could not attend the US con. This would only be natural. The result, however, would be two under-attended cons and a lot of bad feelings.

The thing that is different about Dipcon is that it "travels." While most cons are securely tied to certain locales, Dipcon is allowed to wander the countryside in an attempt to allow as many North American hobbyists as possible to participate. Note that I said "North American," not "global." This is entirely in line with its stated purpose as a uniquely North American event with a vested interest in the cohesion of the North American hobby. It was never meant to travel the world. Dipcon is not the Olympics.

Consequently, should Dipcon be moved to other shores, I think a real crime will have been committed against the North American hobby. Not only will the hobby be deprived of its one unifying con, but the great majority of North American hobbyists will be left unable to attend, period. Witness the trouble most hobbyists have attending Dipcon when it is on the other side of the United States from them, and just imagine how many people would be able to fly to England. Not many.

Furthermore, I don't see why the overseas hobby should be so distraught about all those missed chances to attend a Dipcon. After all, it was conceived as a North American event. North Americans don't complain about their inability to attend Midcon, for instance. Why the difference, then?

In short, I hope that the hobbyists pushing for the relocation of Dipcon in 1988 will listen to reason and drop the idea in favor of a less divisive endeavor. I would be very supportive of a "Worldcon" effort. A truly international con is an excellent idea. Stealing Dipcon is not.

On the other hand, why not move Origins to Warsaw?

EDITOR'S SKILLS: ADMIN-1, COMPUTER-0

This issue marks the beginning of my attempt to formally organize my sub list with the aid of address labels. Please check the space on the label next to your name for the issue with which your subscription is to run out (unless, of course, you are trading). Please calculate this yourself and double-check my figure; if there is a discrepancy, please tell me immediately. Remember that there are all sorts of ways to get free issues: non-Americans get two free upon subscribing, joining the standby list is worth a free issue, and submitting standby orders when called merits another. If I have not credited you with enough issues, I need to know.

Also, due to a very peculiar disk error as I was making a backup, I managed to lose my entire standby list a few days ago. Try as I might, I was only able to retrieve part of it from the netherworld of my damaged disk. Consequently, I have had to reconstruct part of the list from memory. From what I can ascertain, my standby list currently consists of **Robert Acheson, Gary Coughlan, Ted Davis, Brian Kegerreis, Jack McHugh, Bob O'Donnell, Marc Peters, Mike Sargent, Rodney Schmisser, and Nhan Vu**. If you have volunteered to stand by and your name is not one of those mentioned, please inform me. More importantly, if you did *not* volunteer for this and I have included you *anyway*, let me know! I don't want to draft anyone.

It's 12:03 PM, Jane Byrne has just lost the Democratic mayoral primary to Harold Washington, and it's time to turn off the Mac, the television, and the lights. With any luck, this whole thing will be finished tomorrow and in the mail on Thursday. Some schedule.

EMPIRE BUILDER THE NON-RECOMMENDED WAY

Empire Builder, which so many of you have heard so much about due to the recent attempts at running the game by mail in *Trax* and *Loose Caboose*, is actually an excellent multiplayer game. You'd never know it, though, from playing the two-player version. Not only does much of the game's strategy go out the window when playing against only one opponent, but it also boils down to a question of cards; the deck rules the game, essentially (much more so than in the five- or six-player scenario). Assuming that both players are of approximately equal intelligence and the cards do not overly favor one player over the other, the endgame usually sees a player victorious by a margin of one delivery: the losing player has his final load aboard and headed for paydirt when the other player slams down his \$250 million. This means that in some instances, the winner is decided by the first-move determination: he who goes first, wins. Still, for those of you who (like me, unfortunately) have a difficult time finding more than two players, here are some observations I've made after about ten or fifteen playings with just one opponent.

First of all, a lot of interesting ploys become useless when applied to the two-man game. The most glaring fact is that no city can ever be locked out. Consequently, there is almost never any reason to ride your opponent's rail line—it just doesn't pay. Furthermore, riding another's line for even one turn is just too costly: in addition to your *losing* \$4 million, your opponent *gains* it, resulting in an overall monetary shift of \$8 million. This is often a critical margin in victory determination. Also, since one cannot be locked out of a city, the defensive tactic of building that last line into a city with a rare commodity just to lock it out disappears. How many times have you had to ride a line other than your own into San Francisco for that sugar because it was locked out to you? No such frustration in the two-player game—whatever you want can always be had via your own track, provided you build there. This basically eliminates the need to weigh the cost of building to a city one doesn't currently hold a contract to against the danger of being locked out later.

Second of all, because of there being only two players, one almost never gets the chance to make "defensive pickups" to deny goods to another player; not enough counters of a single commodity are ever in play for this to happen. In order for this move to be possible, separate contracts for the same commodity would have to appear on four of the six cards continuously in play, and the one of the players would need a superfreight (which rarely happens in the two-player game, as discussed below) just to hold all the counters. Needless to say, this occurs rarely, if ever.

Rolling stock is governed by one universal principle in the two-player game: fast freight first, and fast! The player who first upgrades to fast freight gains a significant advantage if his opponent does not match this purchase on his very next turn, and the advantage gained increases with each turn that he has "train superiority" over his foe. Furthermore, by upgrading early, a player puts pressure on his opponent to do likewise, and an unwise player may actually be foolish enough to upgrade before he is ready to do so. One should always upgrade as soon as he has \$20 million and one contract that can be reached either with the leftover money or on already existing friendly track. It doesn't matter how much the contract is for—what matters is that the fast freight enter as soon as possible. With only two hands in play, the chance that a useable contract will come up is significantly increased. This same law of probability also dictates a single player will get the really big cross-country contracts (over \$30 million) more frequently. By midgame, the game has usually degenerated into multiple New York/Chicago to San Francisco/Los Angeles/Seattle runs; the faster one can cover this distance, well....

This same logic does *not* apply to the superfreight. By the time a superfreight gets a chance to be useful, the game is usually in its final stages. The new train is almost never in play long enough to earn back the initial \$20 million outlay; such an expenditure puts a player that much further away from his \$250 million goal, and by the time he has earned it back, the other player may very well have won. For a superfreight's superior earning rate to make up for its initial cost, it must be in play for a longer period of time than it has in a two-player match. One is usually better off just going for the win with two loads at a time. If my opponent superfreights, I chuckle.

The cards, though, decide the outcome, but they do so in a very lopsided manner. In the first place, the average two-player game uses only between one-third and one-half of the deck. This means that

over half of the cards in the deck never come into play. This radically alters the probability of a given card appearing at a certain point in the game. This changes some basic assumptions one has about the opening, especially regarding calamities. For example, in the first ten games of two-player *EB*, we never once drew the flood card. This means that one can generally build with abandon on those opening turns, as far less consideration of the possible consequences is required.

Because of the small number of cards actually used, it is possible for certain high-payoff contracts to fall entirely to one player. This is especially crucial in the early game. A short sequence of good cards, and a player can build momentum which no amount of good play on the part of his opponent can break. This become especially evident when a player is able to upgrade to a fast freight several turns before his opponent. Similarly, a run of bad contracts at the beginning can put a player out of the running practically before he begins. Such freakish occurrences are possible in a six-player game, but they tend to happen more often with two players, and cause more damage because their effects are not spread out among several participants.

The two-player game is often characterized by a lack of variety. Because there are only two players, there is often little competition for the prime rail routes. Consequently, each player is usually able to stake out at least one good network in each region and have the luxury of running back and forth, with no unexpected surprises, such as having someone else take the optimal route in a crucial area. This tends to make play repetitive and uninteresting.

Despite the unremitting criticism in this article, *EB* is really quite fun if you can scrounge up enough people. Very uncomplicated, it requires a minimum amount of memorization (of rules, that is) and a fair amount of strategy. Since there are currently no *EB* game openings in North America (possible exception—see below), I would encourage anyone who has the time and inclination to do so to run a game. *EB* is a game which deserves more exposure than it gets. One warning, though: in the interests of keeping game length within a player's lifetime (and keeping players from dying of boredom), the game is best run on two-week deadlines. No negotiations, but plenty of action.



If all this talk about *Empire Builder* whets your appetite for an actual game, you may still be able to enter a game in Jeff Zarse's new 'zine, *Random Thought*. *RT* #2 arrived last week, and still has openings in *Diplomacy* (of course), *Empire Builder*, and a fascinating game called *Nuclear Destruction*. Subs are \$6/10, with gamefees of \$3 for *Diplomacy*, \$10 for *EB* (\$8 if you have the gamestart packet already), and \$2 for *ND*. I, of course, immediately signed up for *ND* (it being the cheapest). If you haven't heard of *ND*, it is put out by Flying Buffalo Co., which is also responsible for the *Nuclear War* and *Nuclear Escalation* card games, as well as (unfortunately) *Tunnels & Trolls*. Jeff's description of *ND* was that it is "another one of those 'lie to everyone else and win' type of games." I love it. Address? Hinman Box 284, Hanover, NH, 03755. If you're tired of this editor taking himself deathly seriously, you'll be refreshed by Jeff's approach. *RT*—the therapeutic 'zine.

Earlier in this issue, you should have noticed that I mentioned the possibility of running a game of *British Rails*, depending on my solutions to an imposing set of problems. The biggest of those problems was devising a method by which I could provide readable game reports. Color photocopying was the simplest answer, but I had thought it too expensive a proposition. Well, after some telephoning, I found a print shop in the Loop (Chicago's name for downtown) which provides such copies at 85¢ each. With a six-player game, I can expect to spend only \$5.10 for each set of color reports (with the rest of the photocopying being at the normal \$0.045 per). That being solved, I now officially announce an opening of *British Rails*. The game will be run by flyer, separate from *BI*, and can handle six players. Game fees will be \$10, as I will have to provide each player with around fifty or sixty order sheets, as well as other miscellaneous items required to play the "revised" version (with Bruce Linsey's modifications). Deadlines will be two weeks apart, although if this proves to be too much I reserve the right to lengthen it to three. If this doesn't fill quickly, though, I might decide not to offer it at all, so I would suggest than any interested players contact me soon.

Boy, don't you wish Geryk would just shut up about these stupid

HOUSE RULES HOUSE RULES HOUSE RULES

The "War by Automatic Pilot" rule continues to generate response. Fortunately, I have allocated more space to this discussion this time, which also means that you can bet I've allocated more time for my response, which means you finally get to hear some semi-coherent opinions from me about the whole thing. Unfortunately, I still haven't heard from Steve Heinowski about the rule's effect on a game's regularity. My policy is going to be that if the rule makes the game a variant, we just dispense with it. I really don't want to run unrateable games. If the mood strikes me later, I may run one like that just for fun. For now, though, I'll just sit back and hope it goes through.

Steve's silence is replaced with the expert opinions of several past Boardman Number Custodians. Asked by Steve for their views on the matter, Kathy and Bill were kind enough to send me copies of their replies, while Rod's opinion is excerpted from a letter to me. In addition, Steve Courtemanche, Bruce Linsey, Randy Grigsby, Mark Berch, and Randolph Smyth were kind enough to add their opinions to the discussion. So....

* * * * *

Kathy Caruso

As far as I'm concerned, and NMR is part of the game, and I would never play in a game under this houserule. As it is stated in the rulebook, if a player NMRs, "his units hold in position." If a GM starts moving and building units for the player based on previous orders he is in part playing the game. I think the easiest way for me to explain my position is to give an example which will show the unfairness of the situation.

In 1901, Italy chooses to bypass Tunis and take zero builds, while setting himself up for two builds in 1902. Russia goes for broke in 1901 and takes three centers. (It is very possible for both of these situations to occur in the same game, as is assumed by this example). In 1902, Italy gets her two builds while Russia picks up two more. Both of these countries NMR on the build turn. By going back to the previous winter, the GM assigns the Russian two builds, and leaves the Italian two short. In no way can this be fair to all the players—the GM has built units for one player. Since both players NMRed on the same turn, both players should play short, but in this case one player will be penalized for missing a crucial season. I would consider that GM interference, and if I were Italy I would have plenty to say about it.

In my own mind, with the GM making a substantial number of moves in the game and choosing which units will or will not move depending on past orders, I think that I would ask the Miller Number Custodian to discuss with you [Steve Heinowski] whether or not this game is a variant.

Bill Quinn

I believe that this policy violates Rulebook Section XIV.3, "Civil Disorder." It represents another case of a GM rewriting the rulebook. If sections of the rulebook are thrown out and new ones substituted then we are not playing *Diplomacy*, but a different game on the same board.

Steve Courtemanche

I believe you are taking the proper stance concerning your NMR policy. It is a very interesting idea to help move the game along and it is good to have the BNC look into it. If, after careful deliberation, it proves to be a variant, you might want your players to vote on whether they want to use it or not. It is, after all, their game to play and enjoy.

Looking at it objectively, I see two lines of reasoning. In a country, there is a commander-in-chief who gives orders. The player of record is the commander-in-chief in a *Diplomacy* game. Each army or navy has an individual who sees that the orders are carried out. The mainstream's line of reasoning goes that the individual leading a unit requires periodic updating of his orders; otherwise, he sits down and watches the world go by. The Berch Rule has the unit trying to complete its mission until previous orders are countermanded.

I personally prefer the former system because it seems to adhere closer to the rulebook, which states that unordered units hold. Your method (er...the Berch Rule) puts an interesting spin on the game. I will be very interested to see Steve Heinowski's reaction to all this and hope that he isn't unduly influenced by outside opinion.

Bruce Linsey

I strongly feel that this is a perfectly legitimate alternative to the traditional "NMR = all units hold" procedure. It seems to me that this is no less arbitrary than the standard procedure. In neither case is the GM manufacturing orders for units out of thin air—he is, in both cases, following a rigidly-defined procedure to assign orders to unordered units. The chief difference seems to be that under Berch's system, the NMR will (usually) have a less drastic effect on the country in question.

Rod Walker

I agree with your reasoning, Bruce, but I see the objections, too. I hope that the BNC will see that this innovation, whatever negative aspects it *may* have, isn't an "irregular" procedure. For whatever it's worth, I suppose you know that Steve has contacted several former BNC's on this. My opinion was mailed to him on 13 December and was generally supportive of the innovation. Mark Berch's brief comment sums up the issue admirably. After reading Bob and Andy's comments, however, I tend to agree that your procedure may create more problems than it solves. Andy suggests that you use some sort of General Orders system (see my HR's for one version of that). Players who are *really* interested in the game will take advantage of that system. There are also instances where a player will *intentionally* NMR (I've done that) in order to avoid keeping a promise. It's a very rare but viable diplomatic alternative. With General Orders, you can always tell the GM, "I'm going to NMR, but don't use my GO's." Well, anyway; I don't see that your procedure will be all that disruptive, but I can see where GO's would be a better solution. Yours is an innovative idea which isn't harmful and doesn't constitute GM interference in the game.

Randy Grigsby

Your "revolutionary" houserule on NMR is a welcome change to the usual practice of having the units hold or the use of neutral orders. It will keep the flow of the game going a little better. An additional plus is that since the majority of NMR's are the weaker countries, it will give standbys a slightly better position than they would normally have.

Rodney Schmisser

While reading *BI* #2 I was impressed by Andy Lischett's comments. Novice Germany on a roll westward concocts a "perfect plan" which, in his mind, will finish France and at the same time rip the flesh of his erstwhile British ally. Britain, sensing the rawness of his ally begins to have second thoughts and in a quick realization of the true situation patches things up with the Frog and together they hold off the German blow. Germany, in a snit over the failure of his plans, goes into a huff and NMRs. England and France, far from being able to address the situation, essentially have to NMR themselves, repeating their last orders, to ward off the GM-generated "instant replay." Meanwhile Russia, guessing the situation correctly, moves in from behind on the animated German and prepares to carve away. Two countries are penalized, unjustly, and another benefits as a result. Yecch! It sounds possible, probably not in exactly the same way just described, but in another game with different countries in a similar situation. Bad play is rewarded, good play goes for naught, and what do we have?... a mess.

OK, those are the reservations. Your response to Andy was equally valid, however. Since when have we seen an "offensive NMR"? For most of us, probably never. The rule opens new dorrs and allows different avenues of play than we are used to. It's an experiment; it may work, it may not. As long as the game is not ruled irregular let's give it a shot and see what happens. Far be it from me to say I've never been wrong before and know the best rules when I see them.

[Why would E/F have to NMR? Surely, their defense against the German "perfect plan" would not be flawless! Sensing the situation, they, too, could take advantage of it, coordinating their moves to thwart each German "GM-generated" attack, knowing exactly where and how to hit. Even if their defence could not be improved upon (unlikely), they would certainly not be forced to NMR.]

[Your argument is valid when it points out that the Russian might be in a better position to take advantage of the German NMR. However, this isn't really affected by the WAP rule. Even if the units stood in place, it would be easy to conceive of a situation where the Russian, in close proximity to the German centers, would be better placed than the E/F alliance, which would have to (at least in part) cross the North Sea/Helgoland barrier before striking at the heart of Germany. The positions of the belligerents, not the actions of the NMRing units, ultimately determine the beneficiaries of an NMR. I do agree, though, that in certain situations the WAP rule can accentuate the affect that an NMR has on one country as opposed to another, due to the orientation of the units in question.]

Randolph Smyth

Interesting “new” houserule about NMR’s. I don’t think there should be any problem with it as long as all players know what they’re getting into. You’d best clear up one potential ambiguity that occurs to me, though: consider the orders A Mun-Bur, A Ruh S A Mun-Bur, A Ber-Mun. All orders succeed, and the player NMRs the following season. Another player attacks with A Mar S A Par-Bur in the “NMR season.” Will you allow it to be stood off with a (German?) support, allowing A Bur to stay in place (“beleaguered garrison” rule); or does A Par dislodge the NMRing A Bur?

The question is, then, whether a support (or convoy) order is valid only for the “original object” unit, or for any unit which has moved to occupy the same area?

[Randolph’s question is interesting, but is flawed. The order for the NMRing German A Ruh would indeed be “A Ruh S A Mun-Bur,” but there would be no unit for it to support. Randolph’s question assumes that because there was an order for A Mun-Bur during the previous season, and during the NMR season there is also an A Mun (albeit a different one), the new A Mun will also be ordered to Bur. This is not the case. The unit which moved from Berlin to Munich would not be ordered to Burgundy on the following NMR turn: note that the rule states that an individual unit follows its last order, if possible. The unit in Berlin’s last order was “A Ber-Mun,” and since the unit is no longer in Berlin it can no longer move. The adjudication in this situation would be: “A bur h (dislodged), A MUN H, A RUH S A MUN-bur (nso).”]

[Anyway, I’m sorry to have broken up the discussion. We end this issue’s forum with a letter from the rule’s inventor, Mark Berch.]

Mark Berch

Thanks for running the discussion on War By Automatic Pilot.

First, a hypothetical situation, for those GM’s who don’t like the rule: Suppose a player sent in, along with his Spring moves, a photocopy of those moves, which he labelled “Tentative Fall Orders.” Nothing else is heard from the player prior to the Fall deadline. Would you use those Fall orders? My guess is that very, very few GM’s would disallow such orders—they do represent the player’s intent. WAP orders do the same thing—they just eliminate the paperwork involved (no photocopying for the player and no extra filing for the GM). The main difference is that under WAP, the player is charged with an NMR. If a player submits tentative orders (of any sort—the same as or different from the previous season)—the GM should not care how a player orders his pieces, and these are used, the GM probably will not NMR the player. WAP, therefore, is a bit harder on the player.

My point is that WAP isn’t some odd notion or a bizarre trick; it is closely related to tentative orders. (Indeed, I originally wanted to name it ATO, or Automatic Tentative Orders, but that lacks zip, eh?)

It is also related to another GMing practice: Perpetual Orders. These are usually employed in end-game situations, but not always. Some GM’s permit these, some do not. WAP is a very limited form of perpetual orders in that the orders are only used once, not perpetually. Moreover, again, WAP triggers an NMR, while perpetual orders do not. But perpetual orders establish the legitimacy of a set of orders being used for more than one season. Not all GM’s permit this, but there is a precedent for orders being used more than once.

In Andy’s letter, he says, “I (and others) like NMR’s, because I don’t NMR.” Of course, Lischett is entitled to his preference, and he should avoid WAP games. But I must point out that Lischett/GM has a very different perspective than Lischett/player. For Lischett/GM uses the most powerful method of avoiding NMR’s in wide use in this country: the Replacement Player. The RP prevents the second NMR, the third NMR—and a stream of NMR’s, which could at least go as long as the game runs. WAP prevents only the first NMR (although it charges an NMR against the player), and is small potatoes compared to the Replacement Player method of preventing NMR’s.

I must also point out that Lischett’s houserules (*Cheesecake* #1) permit perpetual orders. Most of the arguments that he presents apply equally well against perpetual orders. Thus, while one scenario ends with “Tough luck, Germany—the GM just attacked you,” the same could be said of perpetual orders. “Mostly, you will help bored defenders”—so do perpetual orders, and they help those players perpetually—not just once!!!

The odd thing is that Andy suggests, as an alternative, those very perpetual orders, e.g. “If I ever NMR, repeat the previous season’s orders.” But by the very act of signing up in *BI* a player has in effect done that, except it won’t be perpetual.

I'm not at all that worried about promoting player apathy. If a player is apathetic, he will drop out, regardless of what the GM does. What WAP does is give the standby a less damaged position. Every GM should be in favor of that. WAP will sometimes help the player who has temporarily missed his move, but it will often help the new player.

The hobby has had a variety of schemes to forestall the first NMR: General Orders, Spring 1901 Neutral Orders, NMR-insurance. WAP joins that list. It has the significant advantage that it puts the GM in a less active role. Unlike NMR-insurance, he does not remind/inform a player that his orders have not been received. Unlike neutrals, *he* does not write orders. Unlike General Orders, he does not bring an unknown party into the game. He simply takes *the orders the player wrote* and uses them again.

* * * * *

So far in this forum, two issues have been addressed, and I think it's important to point them out in order to avoid confusion. What started the discussion in the first place is the question of whether or not a game is made irregular by the use of WAP. Kathy and Bill addressed this question directly. However, the advisability of the rule has been called into question, and this point is equally important. Andy's letter of last issue dealt with this point exclusively. The problem is that the two points are not interchangeable, or even necessarily interrelated.

The first argument against the rule's regularity is that it requires the GM to somehow "fabricate" orders for a player who had NMRed. This is probably the weakest case against the rule, as it is not logically founded. To wit: When a WAP game is begun, all players are (presumably) informed of the rule's use, as well as the exact procedures governing its implementation. Consequently, when the GM adjudicates a season, a player can, *on his own*, figure out what any given player's moves would be for the next season, should that player NMR. Since any player can figure this out, the GM obviously isn't creating anything. In fact, given an adjudication which indicated that a player NMRed but didn't list his units, all the players in the game could deduce for themselves what the missing moves were, as long as they had saved their adjudications from last season. Since all the players would come up with the same answer, I don't see where the GM has any decisions to make.

The other main objection to the rule's regularity is that by changing the rulebook's instructions for dealing with NMR's, the game being played is no longer *Diplomacy*. On the surface, no one can dispute the charge: the rulebook has indeed been rewritten in two places (Sections XIV.4 & 5). Should this, however, make the game irregular? After all, the American postal game, by its very nature, violates three other sections of the rulebook, specifically IV.1, which states that negotiation periods are to be only fifteen minutes long, XI.1, which forbids negotiation before retreats, and XIII.2, which forbids negotiations before adjustments. Obviously, rulebook violations *in and of themselves* do not make a game irregular.

What, then, actually *does* make a game irregular? Lacking a truly "official" definition, I will have to substitute my own for the purposes of this discussion. Mapboard changes of any sort, obviously, render the game irregular. What about the rulebook, then? Since it is apparently not as sacrosanct as the mapboard, the element of interpretation must appear. As far as I'm concerned, a rulebook change is unacceptable when it *changes the fundamental intent and composition of the original game*.

This is obviously a definition which is widely subject to differences in interpretation. *Diplomacy*, however, is a very carefully constructed game, and as a result is very sensitive to tampering. The question is whether WAP actually constitutes such tampering. It is my belief that it doesn't.

S. Craig Taylor, designer of such wargames as *Wooden Ships & Iron Men*, *Flat Top*, *Air Force/Dauntless*, and *Wings*, recently brought up the subject of design philosophy in an interview in the *General*. In a short section on "game focus," Taylor reiterated the design axiom that a designer must have a certain end in mind when he formulates the system that a game will be based on. Peculiarities to a given situation must be taken into account, and "chrome" in a game's mechanics has to be warranted by the actual effect a game hopes to achieve. While this is nothing new, it does point

to a logic behind game design which often explains abstractions in which a designer indulges in order to make a game more playable.

Diplomacy, as abstracted as it is, is an excellent example of a game kept in "focus." *Diplomacy* adheres strictly to the concept of "abstract representation," and the game is unclouded by mechanics unsuited to the scale in use. To introduce rules for tactical force deployment or unit leaders would be seriously out of balance with the abstract intent of the game, especially in view of the size of the forces which individual armies are supposed to represent. This would, in my view, alter the game's intent. Likewise, a change in the convoy rules, for example, would disrupt the composition of the game by changing the relationships of various countries with one another. If convoys were quicker and easier to perform, the relationships between countries like England and France would change, while those between countries like Russia and Austria would not. Once again, the delicate balance between countries created in the original would be lost. As this balance is a crucial (if not the single most crucial) aspect of the game, changing it would disrupt the game to an unacceptable degree.

The question, then, does not revolve around the rule as a game factor, but rather around the issue of game integrity. Would the NMR rule change, fundamentally, the way one country looks upon another? I doubt it.

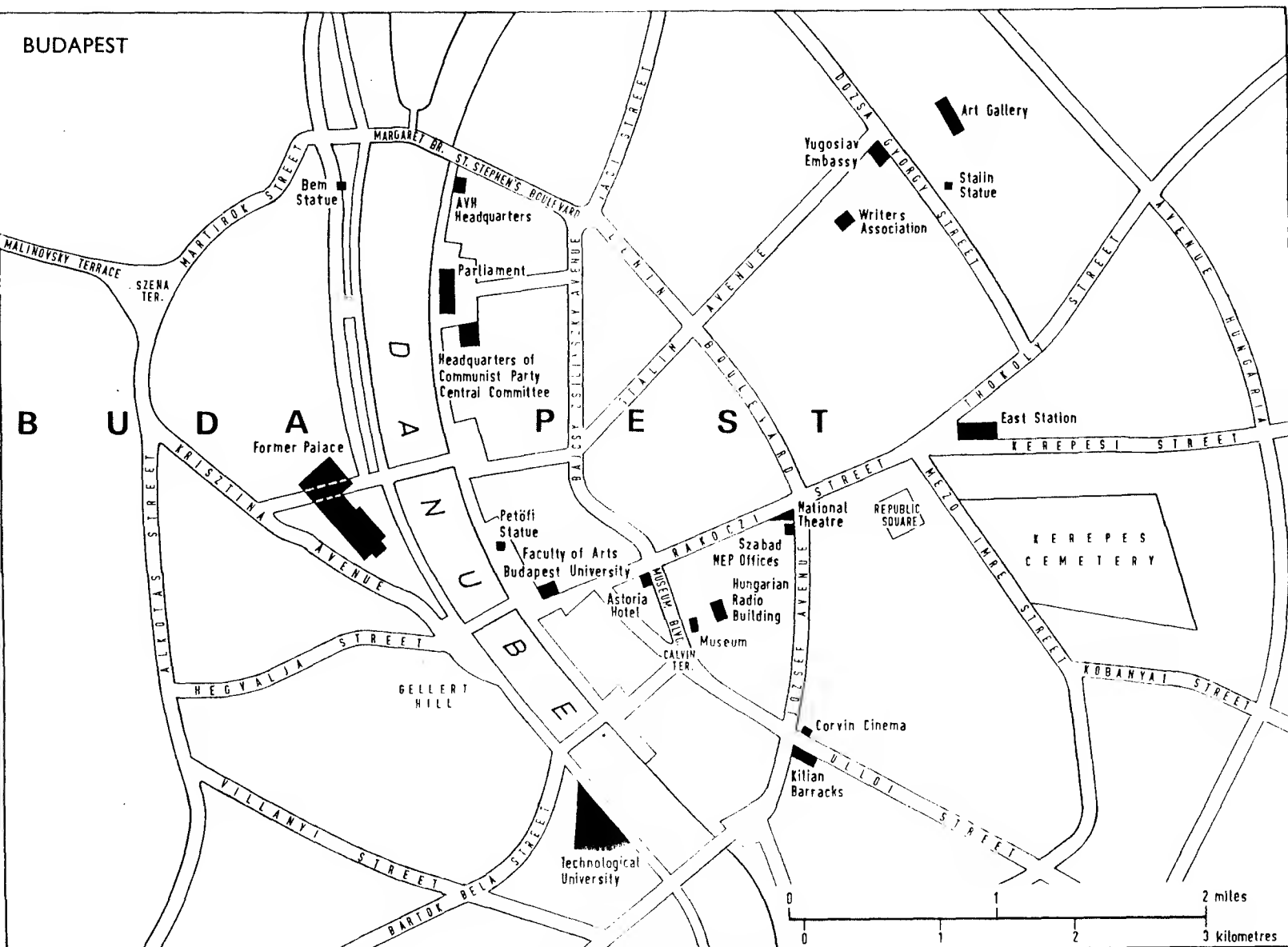
Obviously, the only way to be certain about something like this is to experiment by playtesting. Unfortunately, the hobby doesn't appear to have this option. I don't think it's fair, however, to dismiss the rule simply because it "looks funny." I wonder if there would have been as much outcry if I had required players to submit two sets of orders with each deadline, both sets being identical. This would probably not have drawn the cry of "Irregular!", and it could be justified if I got enough players to do it. After all, if everyone agrees....

In any case, this says nothing about the actual desirability of the rule from a "quality" standpoint. I disagree with the contention that this will encourage player apathy. While this rule may lessen the effect of a given NMR on a player's position, I can't see it actually encouraging the player to play sloppily, secure in the knowledge that he will be "saved" by the WAP rule. In the first place, the security offered by the rule is minimal, at best. A power that has momentum will still lose that momentum with an NMR, WAP or no WAP. An NMR in this kind of position relinquishes control of the game's tempo, and that is something that no serious player can afford to let happen.

In the second place, an NMR looks very bad to the other players in a game. If one NMRs, he has, in effect, given the other players a good reason to treat him with caution in further negotiations. They may not be able to take a chance on an NMR further down the road at a crucial moment, and this can seriously handicap a player's diplomacy.

In the third place, the orders that a player may have "on file" under the WAP rule may be only marginally effective in continuing a player's campaign at a given moment. One season's assault on the Med may be followed by the necessity to parry on the Continent, and having one's orders repeated is a very poor way to conduct operations. I would never feel safe knowing that my orders from a previous season would fill the gap if I happened to miss my moves on time. A serious player doesn't take those kinds of risks.

I see WAP, basically, as a way of improving standby positions. Too many standbys take positions which have had whatever semblance of promise they once had wiped out by an NMR. WAP should, at a minimum, slightly improve the position which is turned over to a standby. This, I feel, is of prime importance, as the general condition of positions turned over to standbys is very poor. Standbys donate their time knowing that, by and large, the positions they will be given will usually be losing ones. I see an improvement to this situation as being an important role of the WAP innovation. All of the debate about the need to call standbys for one-unit positions is all well and good, but the reality of getting someone to play these tiny positions properly is a hard one to avoid. Perhaps it would not be as difficult to find players willing to put some time in as standbys for small powers if the overall condition of standbys is improved.



ATTENTION!

This is Imre Nagy, President of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic, speaking. Today at daybreak, Soviet forces launched an attack against our capital, with the obvious purpose of overthrowing the legal Hungarian democratic government.

Our troops are fighting.

The Government is at its post.

I notify the people of our country and the entire world of this fact.

This radio broadcast on the morning of Sunday, November 4th, 1956, signalled the beginning of the end for what had been nothing short of a quest for national independence on the part of the people of Hungary. Within hours of this broadcast the Soviets were in control of Budapest; Nagy and a group of his supporters and their families had taken refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy; and a new, pro-Russian government had been installed in place of Nagy's coalition, headed by the man who had served as Nagy's own First Secretary. The invasion was indeed a tragic climax to the events of the previous two weeks which had seen Hungarian nationalist aspirations rise to a fever pitch, only to be brutally crushed under the weight of Russian armor.

How was it, then, that Hungary was dealt such a catastrophic blow when the fulfillment of her dreams seemed so close at hand? The answer to this is a complex one, perhaps beyond the scope of this article. What is not beyond the scope of this article is the remembrance of the heroic efforts on the part of the Hungarians some thirty years ago in almost achieving the unachievable.

Hungary's postwar situation was one fated by circumstances. Drawn into the war by a combination of intrigue, extreme nationalism, fear, and social exploitation. The stratified nature of Hungarian interwar society proved an excellent breeding ground for fascism, which in turn exacted a bloody revenge on the Bolsheviks. The Communist revolution in 1919 under Béla Kun (the only successful Bolshevik revolution outside of Russia) instilled in the Hungarians a fear of Communism which played directly into Hitler's hands. Fear of Hitler also manifested itself after Hungary witnessed the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. In short, Hungary, although not entirely against its will, was pushed into the Second World War under pressure from the inexorable forces of history—forces which would continue to dictate Hungarian life up to the present day.

The end of the war saw the Red Army advancing into Hungary as an army of liberation. Unfortunately, the Hungarians became aware from the very start that their "liberation" was to be very different from what they had originally hoped for. The Russians advanced across the country raping and looting, committing atrocities which rivalled those carried out by the Germans and their Hungarian Arrow Cross allies in the closing days of the war. Hungary had been conquered.

The Red Army brought with it a few Hungarian Communists. These "Muscovites" were former exiles from Hungary and had spent many years in Moscow preparing for their triumphant return. Now, supported by Russian guns, they set about their task of bringing Hungary under their political control. The National Council established in Debrecen in 1944 was composed of Ministers chosen from a list composed and approved by Moscow. The actual proceedings of this Council were presided over by Marshal Voroshilov, commander of the Soviet forces, who made all the actual decisions nominally charged to the Council. Deportations began, reminiscent of the deportations Hungary had seen under the Nazis. Members of the fascist Arrow Cross movement joined the Communists, and continued to behave as ruthlessly as ever. Hungary had indeed come full circle.

In these hectic days following the end of the war, the instruments of the coming Communist takeover were planted throughout the Hungarian political system. Even so, however, the Communists could not bring their power to bear on the ensuing elections. Due to their lawlessness and terrorism, the Communists managed only 17 percent of the vote in November, 1946, which went overwhelmingly to the Smallholders Party. The Communists were included in the coalition government, though, and were able to take control of the secret police. From this position they commenced a policy of harassment bent on destroying the majority of the Smallholders while preventing any other democratic group from supplanting them.

The ensuing battle could only have been won by the Communists. Many Smallholder deputies were arrested on fabricated charges, and the Secretary-General of the Smallholders, Béla Kovacs, was accused of treason. When the Parliament tried to protect him, the Russians stepped in and arrested him themselves. While Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy was vacationing in Switzerland, the Communists kidnapped his four-year-old son and released him only on the condition that Nagy immediately resign. Even so, the Communists could only manage 22 percent of the vote in the August, 1947 elections. Consequently, they contrived to absorb the parties of the Left with which they had been at odds in this struggle for power. Leader after leader of the Social Democrats, the Communists' main opposition, was purged, until Árpád Szakasits finally surrendered the political independence of the Leftist opposition by merging his party with the Communists under Mátyás Rákosi in June of 1948. The political murder of the Hungarian opposition was complete.

This victory freed the Communists from the restraints previously imposed upon them by political necessity. The Catholic Church was seen as an enemy, being a potential rallying point for nationalist sentiment. The Primate of Hungary, Cardinal Mindszenty, was arrested on charges of conspiracy and sentenced to life imprisonment. His public trial caused a sensation because he admitted to all the charges brought against him. So-called "Peace Priests," collaborators with the government, were given control of the Catholic Church, and the heads of the Lutherans and Calvinists were disposed of in similar fashion. By the 1949, when the Hungarian Parliament was dissolved, Hungary had fallen completely into the Soviet sphere.

By this time, Hungary was being ruled by what was known as the "Big Four": Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, József Révai, and Mihály Farkas. Rákosi was, in effect, a miniature Stalin, and the fact that he had consolidated his power did not mean that his terror tactics were over. In 1949, the country was once again stunned to learn of the arrest of László Rajk, former Minister of the Interior. In this post, which carried with it the control of the secret police, Rajk had been instrumental in imposing on Hungary the will of the Communists. It was incredible, then, for the nation to hear the charges against

Rajk, which accused him, among other things, of plotting with Tito to overthrow Communist rule in order to restore capitalism and "restore the imperialists." This came at a time when Yugoslavia was the subject of fierce denunciations from Moscow and her satellites for following her "own road to socialism," and Rajk became a victim of the ideological maneuvering which followed the victory of the Communists.

Rajk's trial was all the more fantastic because the Hungarians had no previous experience of the show trials which had become such common political instruments in the Soviet Union during Stalin's reign. The government produced an imposing array of witnesses (including an American missionary who testified that Rajk had been in the service of the American intelligence services), who combined to corroborate charge after charge against Rajk, including that he had been an informer for the fascist police and that he had betrayed the Communist cause during the Spanish Civil War. Rajk and his accomplices, among them General György Pálffy, who had aided Rajk in the establishment of the AVO (Security Police), were summarily executed after admitting to the charges.

The Rajk trial was to have far-reaching consequences for Hungary. Devised by the Russians and orchestrated by Rákosi in an attempt to bring about the downfall of Tito, it ended up sowing the seed for the downfall of Rákosi himself. In spite of this, the trial sparked a wave of anti-Yugoslav rhetoric from the other Communist states, as well as similar purges in other Communist countries to rid themselves of so-called "nationalist deviators"; in other words, those who did not hold up the Soviet Union as the model for world Communism. Many Party leaders were forced to give up their posts and either imprisoned or exiled.

The purges which followed Rajk's trial and execution were the first in a continuing cycle of terror directed by Rákosi against those Party elements which he considered in some way "undesireable," as well as those remaining non-Communists which had somehow managed to survive in positions of importance. Similar in implementation, although not in scope, to Stalin's *Yezhovshchina* of the 1930's, these wholesale arrests were the culmination of Rákosi's consolidation of power. By 1953 the Hungarian Communist Party's core was composed almost exclusively of dependable, hard-line followers of the Stalin cult. Rákosi had succeeded in building for himself an unassailable political fortress from which he could rule over his domain. Little did he know that change in the Kremlin would bring far-reaching changes to his personal fiefdom.

In 1953, Stalin died. The ensuing shakeup in the Soviet leadership presaged a serious change of course for the Soviet Union (and, of necessity, for the satellite countries). In June of that year, selected elements of the Hungarian leadership were called to Moscow for undisclosed reasons. Once they arrived, the entire weight of the Politburo (or, as it was then called, the CPSU Presidium) descended on Rákosi, placing on his shoulders the entire catalogue of Hungarian ailments, particularly the economic ones. After a severe tongue-lashing that included several nasty exchanges, Rákosi was told that he would not be allowed to continue as the sole leader of Hungary. Power such as his must be shared in order to avoid the mistakes made possible by Stalin's "cult of personality." Consequently, Rákosi was to give up his post as Prime Minister (previous to this he had concurrently held the post of Prime Minister and First Secretary of the Party), relinquishing it to Imre Nagy. This was even more significant from a political point of view as it was unclear which post would indicate the true head of the government. While the Party post had traditionally been the leading position, Malenkov had recently given up his Party secretaryship and, as the most powerful man in the Kremlin at the time, his move was looked upon as an indicator of the shifting emphasis of post-Stalinist politics. Rákosi, then, had serious cause for worry regarding his demotion.

Nagy's program, known as the famous "June Resolutions," showed a complete about-face from the single-minded policies of the Stalin era. Agricultural collectivisation was slowed, a new emphasis was placed on light industry, and political prisoners were rehabilitated. Combined with this were rather severe condemnations of Rákosi and, indeed, the previous political leadership in general. The fact that the exact texts of these resolutions were never made public strongly indicates that they were very unforgiving of the mistakes of the past. Hungary had embarked upon a "New Course," and the men responsible for past errors were to be held accountable. It was time for dramatic change.

It should be pointed out here that although the new policies adopted by Nagy were dramatic in their departure from previous practice, Nagy was a true Communist, and would remain so to the very end of his life. His ideology was a very carefully considered one, and very idealistic at that. His missionary zeal prompted him to write, upon being rebuked and removed from power in 1955, a comprehensive defense of his policies and positions. This series of writings, smuggled out of the

country and published as *On Communism*, is a fascinating document detailing one man's belief in the system to which he had devoted his life. The document itself has been the subject of intense debate, as various interpretations have been made of Nagy's exact stance on certain aspects of Marxism and Leninism. Even without this scholarly interest, *On Communism* is interesting for its varied composition, obviously reflecting his evolving perspectives on the issues addressed. It is also riddled with seeming inconsistencies, although these might be explained away by the very fact that the conditions under which he wrote were by no means uniform throughout the period of his writing. The polemical nature of his work made it impractical to apply, even had the current Party leadership had the slightest interest in doing so, which it didn't.

Nagy's "New Course" was tragically short-lived. Rákosi and his clique offered little or no help in its implementation, and Nagy was often unsure exactly what Moscow's current attitude was. The only way for Nagy to have cleared the many blocks in his path would have been for him to remove Rákosi, and this was impossible without Soviet instruction, or at least consent. Moscow was still distrustful of Nagy, considering him too "nationalist" in character, preferring to maintain Rákosi's position in the hierarchy. Nagy was unable to press for full implementation of the June Resolutions, and the New Course found itself fatally bogged down.

Already in late 1954, the ominous signs of political change were foretelling Nagy's fall from favor. Moscow's attitude (which was the final arbiter of all events in Hungary) was changing, and this was reflected in the behaviour of the Stalinists in the Hungarian leadership, who became increasingly critical of Nagy. Mihály Farkas the first to say: "There is no New Course... it is rightist to pursue it ... the old road must be pursued, only some mistakes to be corrected." Nagy's supporters began to lose their government posts, victims of Rákosi's consolidation of power in anticipation of a turnover in the Kremlin.

In January 1955, the Hungarian leadership was again summoned to the Kremlin. This time it was Nagy's turn to be subjected to abuse. Malenkov, who had been Nagy's strongest supporter in Moscow, followed the Soviet custom of having the mentor attack the protégé, and proceeded to point out every ideological failing of Nagy's tenure as Prime Minister. Point after point was brought against Nagy, who made every effort to vindicate himself through systematic argument. He was repeatedly shouted down. In any case, it would not have mattered. The Kremlin's policy had been made, and Nagy was forced to face the repercussions of the change in attitude. The fact that most of the failings could be attributed to the resistance of Rákosi to the new policies made no difference.

In the Kremlin's rapid about-face we can see clearly the ends to which "ideology" was used as a weapon in palace power struggles. The reality of the situation was that Khrushchev, in an attempt to unseat his rival Malenkov, had enlisted the help of the Stalinists in the Politburo (notably Molotov and Kaganovich), and aimed his first series of attacks at Nagy, who was the main advocate of Malenkov's policies outside the Soviet Union. In attempting to show how harmful Malenkov's ideas were to the people's democracies, he hoped to show the danger that Malenkov posed to the Soviet Union.

Malenkov was demoted in February, and it was then the turn of Nagy to face expulsion or demotion. Bolshevik protocol called for a leader in disfavor to practice self-criticism, in which he accepts the blame for his "mistakes" in exchange for less severe treatment from those who have found fault with him. While Malenkov had done so, Nagy was unwilling to compromise what he felt were proper and appropriate principles. Was it not Rákosi who had obstructed Nagy's policies? Was it not Rákosi who had created the difficulties in the first place with his blind adherence to Stalinist doctrine? No, Nagy would not recant his earlier statements, nor would he make amends for the political damage which he had caused. Even the appearance of Mikhail Suslov in Budapest, who had come to personally appeal to Nagy in order to get him to practice self-criticism, would not budge him. The result was inevitable. In April, Nagy was dropped from all his positions in the government, and, in November, was expelled from the Party. The impact on Nagy, a faithful Party member for over forty years, was devastating. Distraught and sobbing, Nagy was to say to a friend, Tamás Aczél, who visited him the day he was expelled: "Look what they've done to me... after so many years as a Party militant... These absolute nonentities... But I told them the truth... I told them the truth."

Upon Rákosi's return, his position was not as strong as it had been previously. The main reason for this was the changing relationship between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Previously at each other's throats, the two countries (mainly on Soviet initiative) made efforts to smooth out relations in the summer of 1955. A delegation of Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and Bulganin made its way to Belgrade, where Khrushchev humbled himself with profuse apologies for the manner in which Yugoslavia had

been treated in the post-war years. Such reconciliations were anathema to Rákosi, who had up until then pursued a staunchly Stalinist policy of denunciation towards Yugoslavia. Now, the Stalinist line was being discredited, and this could only mean disgrace for Rákosi. As was typical of Soviet bloc politics, Rákosi, once an avid follower of Soviet foreign policy methods, found himself the victim of the changing tide of political expediency. Furthermore, the Rajk trial had permanently crippled his ability to change with the situation, for if Tito was to be vindicated, it would mean that Rajk could not have been a criminal. Rákosi could never survive such a revelation. It did not help that Rákosi had been one of the most zealous of Tito's persecutors during the reign of Stalin. Changing foreign relations had trapped Rákosi in the confines of his own adherence to Moscow's policies. It was he, not they, who would bear the final responsibility.

The final blow which made Rákosi's downfall inevitable came during the Twentieth Part Congress of the CPSU, held in Moscow during February, 1956. In an attempt to push the balance of power in his favor in the Presidium and the Central Committee, Khrushchev made his now-famous attack on Stalin, which was meant to demolish the "Stalin myth" and eliminate Stalin's close supporters. While his tactics were crude and his intent nearly transparent, the speech could not help but have far-reaching effect. For the first time, the excesses of the Stalinist era were criticised as "atrocities," and the repercussions of this admission could be felt throughout the entire Soviet system. Eyes immediately turned towards the "little Stalins" in the people's democracies. This made Rákosi's position even more untenable, although he stubbornly refused to give way. Instead of yielding, he made himself out as the champion of Party democracy and collective leadership, which was laughable considering the behaviour of the Rákosi-led Security Police. It was a clear case of Soviet internal interests clashing directly with Soviet imperial aims. By strengthening the Soviet leadership's internal structure through the purging of the Stalinists, Khrushchev opened a veritable Pandora's Box of problems for the leaders of the satellite states, who suddenly found themselves in contradiction with the tenets of the Twentieth Party Congress. It was perhaps with some justification that Khrushchev was subsequently blamed for the upheavals in Poland and Hungary several months later.

Despite Rákosi's attempts to push the blame onto others (such as the imprisoned security chief Gábor Péter), it soon became clear that he would have to make some sort of concession. In his speech at the reburial of Laszlo Rajk (now buried with the "Heroes of Communism"), Rákosi admitted that crimes had been committed by the Party leadership and the security apparatus, and that he would personally root out and punish those "transgressors of socialist legality." The fact that it was patently ridiculous for the undisputed leader of these criminals to suddenly vow to bring them to justice was not lost on the Hungarians, who were anxious for Rákosi's removal. The Petöfi Circle, a group of dissident intellectuals named for the great Hungarian revolutionary poet, was formed in Budapest and sponsored a series of debates on issues important to the Hungarian nation, such as resource management, economic and educational policies, and the question of freedom. The last such debate ended with the crowd shouting for Imre Nagy's return to power.

On 28 June 1956, the day following this last debate of the Petöfi Circle, strikes and rioting broke out in Poznan, an industrial city in Poland. Violently suppressed by the authorities, the rioting ended with a hundred and thirteen people dead. Rákosi was heartened by the way in which the Polish outburst had been dealt with, and proceeded to implement measures of his own against the Petöfi Circle. Having drawn up a plan for the arrest of around four hundred people (including Imre Nagy), Rákosi presented the list to the Hungarian Politburo for consideration. Rákosi's plan was to institute the "uncovering" of an "Imre Nagy anti-Party conspiracy." Unfortunately for him, the Politburo remained unconvinced, and postponed discussion of the matter until the next day, or 17 July 1956. During this time, formerly pro-Rákosi elements were already plotting his removal from power. Ernő Gerő, in particular, was active in soliciting Soviet aid. Politburo members informed Soviet ambassador Yuri Andropov of Rákosi's intentions, and asked for Soviet assistance. 17 July brought the unexpected arrival from Moscow of Soviet Presidium troubleshooter Anastas Mikoyan, who sat in on the Politburo meeting. After hearing the arrest plan debated, he informed the Hungarians that it was the wish of the Kremlin that Rákosi resign as First Secretary. Rákosi, upon hearing this, demanded confirmation directly from Moscow, whereupon a telephone call to Khrushchev confirmed the bad news. 18 July brought Rákosi's resignation, as well as the naming of a new Hungarian First Secretary. Unfortunately for the Hungarian people, their new leader was not Imre Nagy. It was Ernő Gerő.

Next time: THE THIRTEEN DAYS

COALITION BUSTING

by Ted Davis

Before the very first adjudication, we all have our own ideas about what we'd like to do, or what we expect may happen. But nobody wants to be the "odd man out," the victim of early alliances. So, as you go about your business of establishing allies and plotting strategy, remember, as the saying goes, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! You must make every possible effort to bust a coalition forming against you as soon as possible. Consider these appeals to your neighbors.

1. The unexpected alliance. Suppose you are Austria, suspecting a Russian/Turkish alliance against you. You might try convincing Turkey that allying with you instead of Russia presents such a large element of surprise that it would be well worth his while to ally with you. But don't leave it there. Tell him that his influence with the Russian can go a long way in improving your collective position over the Bear. The more you sweeten the deal, the better are the chances of its working.

2. Offer an extremely favorable supply-center split. The question here is, how much is it worth to you to bust their coalition? This is, ultimately, up to you.

3. Claims of player unreliability. Tell your potential ally that the person he wants to ally with frequently NMR's or indiscriminately stabs for little gain, etc. *Be careful!* This tactic can backfire on you in a hurry.

4. Offer a piece of the action. Suppose here, you are Turkey v. Russia/Austria. Write to the Russian player and say: "Italy and I are going after Austria. Do you want in?" If not, word of Italian treachery will probably get back to Austria, which might disrupt their efforts against you.

5. Form a triple alliance with them. Not likely, but it's worth a try; otherwise, I wouldn't have bothered to mention it.

Once the game is afoot, busting a coalition against you can be pretty tough. Your goal should be to prevent your position from deteriorating to the point where it is perceptibly useless. If that happens, anyone within reach will try to get their share of your centers.

The following steps are designed to hinder or frustrate their efforts against you, perhaps even to the point where one of them decides that their current alliance is not going to achieve his/her goals. If you hold out long enough, developments elsewhere on the board may force one or both of the coalition members to rethink their strategy in your favor.

1. Long range help. Solicit help from other fronts or from distant players. Study the situation carefully. You'll have to find some reason to be able to convince those distant players why it's in their interest to help you, or have you survive!

2. Suspicion/Confusion. Do anything you can to arouse suspicion in the minds of the members of the coalition. Deceptive press releases are good for this. For instance, suppose you are Germany v. an Anglo-French alliance. During Winter, 1901, submit this press: "GER—FRA: Sorry, mate, but I simply can't afford to build a fleet right now." The trick here, of course, is to get the English player thinking that he smells a rat! Another example of this is (you are Austria v. a Russo-Turkish combination) "AUS—ENG: Finally got your letter, but by the looks of things right now, I doubt if I can be of much help. Good luck, I'll need it!" Always be alert for blundered or defensive moves by a member of the opposing coalition that you can exploit in the press. You want them scratching their heads!

3. Threats. We've all had to do this at one time or another—threatening to sacrifice everything just to take somebody down with us. A variation to this ploy is to threaten the larger member of the coalition this way, while promising to puppet to the other. Then, just at the right time, reverse course and attack the puppeteer with all you've got! With any luck, or a little help, it may improve your position.

4. Dupery. Try to dupe one of the members of the coalition into allying with you. This is a long shot, but if the circumstances are right, it just might work. Example: You are France v. an Anglo-Prussian alliance. Promise Italy anything, but get her to move A Tyo-Mun. Meanwhile, write to the German, using the naïve approach. Tell him you really want to ally with him badly, and to prove your loyalty, you warn him that Italy is going to attack Munich! However unlikely, he may decide to ally with you because you are honest, naïve, and therefore easy to manipulate, or in a good position to stab his partner, or for some unknown reason. If nothing else, you may cause him to defend Munich with an army that might have been put to better use elsewhere.

5. Verbal badgering. Naturally, try to exploit any weaknesses you spot in their alliance as signs of impropriety. Continuously remind them how open they are to a stab, and how one partner or the other is a notorious stabber. Get as many other players as you can to do the same. The more, the better. Maybe if he hears it enough, he'll succumb to the pressure for fear of looking stupid should his partner really stab him. Better yet, maybe he'll stab first! Don't hold your breath, though.

6. The Sting. It's 1903, and the coalition has had huge successes against you. Look over the board carefully. Reread the letters you've gotten from the coalition members. Get a firm grip on what is happening. Now choose your future ally. Write to him. Carefully select your words: words that appeal to that devious element in every *Diplomacy* player. Convince him that this brilliant mock-war he's been waging against you is all part of a bigger, more brilliant plan wherein he now turns on his unsuspecting (very unsuspecting) ally, and with you as his *junior* partner loyally at his side, sweeps the entire board. YOU HAVE ARRIVED!

How and when to use any of these tactics depends, of course, on the situation. As I stated earlier, I believe that prevention is the key. One last suggestion: during your initial negotiations, caution your neighbors about the potential of the other players in the game. This way, you've given them something to think about, and should you have to use these tactics against them, you won't come across like you are praying from a foxhole. You'll need all the credibility you can muster, and, should you go out, all the dignity you deserve!

[Four free issues go to Ted for this piece. I have several more strategy articles lined up for upcoming issues, and I encourage anyone who has any inclination to write one to do so.]

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

Simon Billenness is ending his participation in the *Zine Register*. After the next issue (#9, for which the deadline for entries is April 30th), Simon will be relinquishing the publishing duties of the *ZR*, to which he has brought so much credit and respect over the last year. One can only hope that the next publisher/editor does as good a job as Simon has, although this is hoping for a lot. In any case, I would like to give Simon my hearty congratulations on a job well done, and hope that he isn't going to be running off back to England *too* soon.

The flyer promoting the postal *Diplomacy* hobby is being put back in the copies of the game! This is the flyer that used to inform so many game buyers of the existence of the postal hobby, but was discontinued by Avalon Hill some years ago. Now, thanks to the efforts of Simon Billenness and Ken Peel, the flyer will once again be included in each game box.

Larry Peery's latest idea to keep the hobby abreast of what is going on within it is called *Diplomacy World News*. *DWN* is a brief, four-page flyer outlining what is going on in the hobby. *DWN* is intended as a supplement to *DW*'s news offerings, filling the gaps when *DW* is not published. Personally, I have some reservations about the straining of *DW*'s resources by this additional product, but as long as Larry can keep it afloat it seems like a good idea. The flyer is in the experimental stage at this point, and it is unclear whether future issues will be forthcoming or not.

the courier

With this installment of the letter column, I have cleared the backlog of letters written in response to **BI** #1. I thank all of you once again for taking the time to write and encourage me. From now on, however, I must be a little tighter with the letter column, or it might explode into a monster which I won't be able to control. I will still do my best to print letters when I get them, but I might occasionally have to cut some up, or leave some out entirely. If this happens to your letter, please understand my problems of time and money versus desire to please. I will occasionally clear the backlog of letters which haven't grown too old (and if you don't want an old letter printed, please let me know), but that won't happen too often. In the meantime, please keep writing. I read *everything*, even if it doesn't make it through to these pages.

With that, let's start this column off with probably the kindest letter I've received thus far....

+++++

Linda Courtemanche

I loved getting Issue #2 (and seeing my name in that nice dark bold print)! I can tell that **BI** is already one of my favorite zines because I find myself just a bit let-down when it's not in my mailbox. Only a select few zines give me that feeling.

[Why thank you, Linda. That's quite a compliment. I hope that future issues of this thing don't do anything to change that.]

Question: Since your Macintosh is at school and not at your apartment, does this mean you'll be taking summers off from pubbing? Just thought I'd ask while I'm thinking of it.

[I'm glad you brought this up when you did. Having the Mac only at school necessarily restricts my access to a Mac to the school year only. I do own a very nice Olivetti electronic typewriter, though (too bad it's broken right now), and I will most likely switch to that over the summer. You can look for (and perhaps dread) the coming drop in aesthetic quality, but from my initial 'zine drafts (done on the same typewriter over the summer, with the aid of dry-letter transfers), the result won't look too bad.]

*[The problem with this is basically one of pagination. If I were to retype #1 on my typewriter, it would be approximately forty-five pages long. #2 would be roughly seventy pages. While I wouldn't mind the typing, the huge increase in postage and (especially) photocopying costs would certainly drive me to bankruptcy. If I were planning on working full-time over the summer (like normal college students) I could probably manage, but, fool that I am, I am planning to return to Yale for their intensive language program. Consequently, I will probably put **BI** on a reduced summer schedule of about eight-week deadlines. This would mean two issues from June to September or so, with the normal schedule resuming in the fall.]*

*[One thing I might do, though, is rent a Mac (especially for the rest of the school year). I have a fantastic deal here at work, where I get unlimited use of the computers plus all the free laser printing I need (being the manager, though, I would certainly hope I would get some fringe benefits), but the ten-minute walk from my apartment often translates into half an hour or more of hassle as I decide what I need to take, fumbling through folders and binders, and generally having organizational problems. The result is that the whole enterprise takes up more time than it should. If I had one in my room, I could cook dinner, read whatever I needed to read for class, and type for **BI** intermittently, whenever I found a few minutes. If the price of the Mac+ drops once the new top-of-the-line product is unveiled (as I fully expect it to), I may seriously consider taking out a loan to buy one of these things. The University already has a deal where one can purchase one through them for a little over \$1000. I really want one of these things for myself.]*

All those mentions of *Awful Green Things* are intriguing me! Could you possibly summarize the game for newcomers like me? I'm tempted to get involved in any game a ten-year-old can walk away with...it sounds like just my speed! However, I should know what I'm getting into first.

[AGTfOS is a very tongue-in-cheek game from TSR which pits green aliens (which look a bit like green eggs on legs) against a cuter-than-hell crew of humanoids for control of a spaceship. The ship is an exploration ship, so the crew doesn't have any real weapons on board. Instead, the crew has to attack with things like knives, pool sticks, fire extinguishers, hypodermic needles, cans of rocket fuel, stun guns, and even canisters of a food substance (kind of like C-rations) known as "zgwortz." Since the Green Things are completely alien to the crew, the crew doesn't know at first how any given weapon will affect the invaders. Consequently, the crew player draws a little chit out of a cup each time he tries a new weapon out. The weapons can shrink the Green Things, make them grow, stun them, kill them, or even make them multiply (by blowing them up into little fragments, which then each regenerate into Green Things). The Green Thing player tries to eat as many crew members as possible while multiplying his Green Things (they grow each turn). Eventually, the Green Things either eliminate the crew (or force them to escape in the ship's "lifeboats"), or the crew vanquishes the Green Things and saves the ship.

[The game does not require a lot of strategy, as there is lots of die-rolling and a lucky player can sometimes make up for bad play, but one has to have some plan, and the moderate amount of strategy needed makes the game an excellent one for people who don't want to spend all evening counting things like bombardment factors, air interdiction levels, and the like. The game's primary appeal, though, is the artwork: the crew members are all individually drawn—simply but nicely—and named to give each one a separate personality. The Green Things are divided into adults, babies, and eggs, and the struggle which rages across the nicely-done mapboard is often hilarious just to watch. In addition, the game comes with a short set of absolutely riotous comics which chronicle the ship's expedition and set the stage for the showdown with the aliens. I don't know if TSR still makes it, but if they do, I would advise you to buy it immediately. You won't be sorry. I fully intend to run a game when I am certain it won't be a burden.]

Applause on toning down your plans for a rash of immediate gamestarts. I still think you are tackling a mammoth job as it is, but at least you are not losing sight of the specter of burnout. It's always a shame when a pubber—novice or veteran—stops finding fun in the hobby, and begins to think of it as a chore like vacuum-cleaning or diaper-changing. I hope you never lose your joy in pubbing!

So, how was your vacation? Where did you go, what did you do? And, in the New Year's Resolution Dept.: did you REALLY get all the reading and writing done that you intended?! (If so—wow!)

[My vacation was pretty mundane, with the exception of seeing some friends from high school whom I see all too infrequently these days. A friend of mine from Poland (who now lives in Canada) also came to stay over Christmas, so that was a very enjoyable experience. He is also into gaming (somewhat), and we dragged out some games which I hadn't played in ages (as well as our mandatory three or four Awful Green Things games—he loves that game, too).

[As far as reading is concerned, I did get a lot done, though not the works that I had intended. Instead of reading all of Riasanovsky's Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought, I split my time between that and his one-volume History of Russia (which meant that I read about half of each). Instead of Gombrowicz's Ferdydurke, I re-read Kundera's Life is Elsewhere, and did my assigned Winter Quarter readings in Milosz's History of Polish Literature. It was pretty productive, I guess. I also started writing an article for the General on Victory Games' NATO and an article for this 'zine on Empire Builder, but the former project is still incomplete, while the latter is in this issue.]

About the houserules brouhaha: Hang in there! From my own publishing experience, I have found that it is impossible to keep everyone happy. In my original draft of this letter, I offered a lot more advice, but I have decided you don't really need it. You seem to be openminded, inviting debate on the "War By Automatic Pilot" controversy. And I suspect that, once deliberation is over and the verdict is in, you will calmly stick by it. Believe me, that rational approach is a huge relief to see—it has been all too rare in this hobby. If everyone were as reasoned as you, there would be no feuds, whatever THEY are!!

[I am indeed inviting debate on the houserule, but I will probably discard it if the games are ruled irregular. Of course, if all the players want to keep it, what can I say? My thanks to Steve for his comments regarding the matter.]

Your lettercol is fascinating, and I'm especially pleased to see your readers are writing in about politics. Hearing what people from all over think of current policies is, for me, one of the joys of my

hobby zine involvement.

Last but not least, Bruce, you can relax—maybe Brux would have let you starve at Mickey D's, but WE wouldn't have!! Happy New Year!

[*And the same to you.*]

Steve Emmert

The top of this page notwithstanding [*which is from a pad of "From the Desk of God" stationery*], for God's sake, stop this "honored to have you" stuff. I'm just a guy. Besides, I'm very happy to be getting **BI**, and I agree wholeheartedly with all the compliments under which you seem to have been inundated.

My ancestry is not in vogue this season, vis-à-vis yours and others more recently transplanted to these shores. I'm an American white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male landowner (the shameful minority), and can trace my paternal line through eight other white American Anglo-Saxon Protestant male landowners to Simon Emmert, who arrived in America in about 1760. So much for ethnicity.

[*Despite whatever the prevailing mood of the country seems to be, I have never found any reason to be ashamed of a long-established background in the "New World" (as you obviously aren't). In fact, I have sometimes found myself musing on what it would be like to have that sort of background myself (and the thought was not displeasing).*]

[*By the way, I read your comment in the latest House of Lords (#11) about why publishers publish. It may not mean much to Martin, but it sure means a lot to me, and I appreciate the support. I'm glad you enjoy BI.*]

Jack McHugh

Just got your latest issue today. Glad to hear from you—I figured you just fell behind. Okay, okay, it's a thesis I'm writing. That's what I get for making a mistake with a fellow grad student, especially you terminal Ph.D. types.

[*You have a mistaken impression: I am not a grad student. I may have my M.A. in four years of undergrad study, but I am most definitely an undergrad at this point. A second-year undergrad. University of Chicago jargon refers to students by year (first-year, second-year, third-year) instead of by the more usual "freshman," "sophomore," "junior," etc.*]

By the way, I have read Vasili Aksyonov, or should I say I have tried. I forced my way through most of *The Island of Crimea*. While I found the premise fascinating—an independent Crimean Republic separated from the mainland (sort of a Russian Taiwan)—the plot was deadly slow-moving. I think I also missed a lot of the more recent analogies, that is, the book was too Russian (or I was not Russian enough). How about *We*, have you read that? I can't think of the author's name off the top of my head.

[*Neither can I, and I have not read it. It is true that a lot of contemporary Russian literature has a peculiarly Russian character, which a foreigner can easily miss in its entirety, which would give him the impression that there is nothing to it. I miss a lot, too, but I think I pick up some of it, at least. I liked The Island of Crimea, as the plot was really secondary to the scenario. It basically consisted of Aksyonov dreaming about this independent republic, which he constructed in painstaking social detail (not always directly).*]

[*As a last hope, I recommend the following books for you: Milan Kundera's The Joke, and Henryk Sienkiewicz's Quo Vadis. If you don't like either of these examples of East European literature (the former being modern Czech, the latter being nineteenth-century Polish), I give up. Perhaps we look for different things in literature.*]

So you don't like Vidal—is that his writing or just him—I know he comes off as a pretty obnoxious guy in person. How about Sinclair Lewis? *Babbitt* and *Elmer Gantry* are simply excellent novels that are also excellent social commentary on the American middle class of the twenties, much of it still attributable to today's yuppies.

[*Babbitt? Oh God, talk about slow-moving plots! That one will put you to sleep for sure, if the main character doesn't frustrate and annoy the hell out of you before that. As you might have guessed, I read Babbitt, and I did not enjoy it. That whole period is incomprehensible to me.*]

[*Vidal is a jerk, yes, and I cannot seem to get that out of my head when I read his writing, I guess.*]

I will admit that he is one of the old-school scholars (and an extremely intelligent one, at that), which rates him rather highly in my book, if I could just suppress the impulse to punch him in the nose.]

Wow! You mean someone outside of my personal group of friends knows about OMD? I'm impressed! I have all of their American LP's. As for Laurie, I agree, but how many sounds can you get from a violin by plucking it? She also makes Bruce Springsteen's voice sound good by comparison. No mean feat, considering he can't sing a note. Despite this, I like her music—even I don't know why.

[I'm sorry to disappoint you, but OMD is pretty popular where I come from. In Michigan, I have a younger sister in her second year of high school, and her circle of friends (the typical upper-class, trendy, private-school teenager crowd) considers OMD to be an "in" band (and has for some time), if that tells you anything. As far as Springsteen is concerned, I just can't connect with the guy. All these Vietnam, small-town, young rebel lyrics. They sound nice, but I just don't get much out of them. I will say, though, that I think his throaty, non-melodic voice is very appropriate for his message and effect. Frankie Goes to Hollywood tried to sing one of his songs once, and the result was awful. Nope, his voice may be bad, but it works. Anderson should just give up on the music and go into childrens' stories. She is obviously a natural storyteller, and Tammy Grimes won't last forever.]

It is funny that you should mention *Trybuna Ludu* because I just read an interview/biography of its editor in a recent issue of *Atlantic*. I can't remember the exact issue, but it is either January or February of 1987. By the way, it had some good Polish jokes (that is, told by Poles): A dog came from Prague to Warsaw and the Warsaw dogs could not believe it because the quality of life is so much greater in Prague. So one of the Warsaw dogs went up to him and said, "Why did you come here? It will be years before you get your own doghouse. You will have to wait in line hours to get the most basic necessities of life. Why did you come to this poor, dingy country?" The Czech dog smiled and said, "To bark!"

["Ah yes," as they say, "the old 'barking dog' joke." I have indeed heard that one. It dates back about thirty years to Gomulka's liberalisation programme before it was stifled by pressure from Moscow. The funny thing about these jokes is the way that they flit in and out of relevancy to the current situation. In 1967-8, the joke would have made no sense, while in 1980-1 it would have been clearly understandable. Eastern Europeans have tons of these things, but I am quite out of date with the latest, seeing how fast those things spring up. It doesn't matter, though, as so few Americans have heard them (and those that have keep getting told the same few over and over) that we'll never run out of amusing anecdotes.]

As for hockey, I take it you know the standard joke about it: I went to a fight and a hockey game broke out. I don't know if I am crazy about the European style, though, but it is hard to defend the Canadian (all the hockey players are either from Canada or Minnesota) "fighting" style—as opposed to just a physical style of hockey.

I don't understand why nobody plays *Machiavelli*. It was designed as a sister game to *Diplomacy*, yet no zine I know of plays it pbm. I think the problem is that it is not new, like *Pax Britannica*, and lacks a pbm zine of its own; after all, most publishers start out as players.

[I think the problem runs deeper than that. Diplomacy can be called the perfect game because it has so much of what the normal person likes (player interaction) without having any of what the normal person dislikes (complicated rules/mechanics). I would go so far as to say there will never be another game like Diplomacy for pbm. Players who like wargames will always be hard at their Russian Campaign boards, while players who couldn't be bothered with hexes and factors will stick to Diplomacy, which is easy to learn, and requires a minimum of complicated strategy. Middle-of-the-road games like Machiavelli and Pax simply don't stand a chance.]

As for the Iran deal, I think I pretty much said it all before, except to add that the *contra* part is a clear violation of US law. If the Congress had any balls (to put it as crudely as possible) they would begin impeachment hearings. However, I doubt that they would dare breathe a word of it until someone stands up and says that they told Reagan everything and he okayed—unlikely to happen unless he gets an attack of conscience—so I doubt anything will become of the transfer. Gee, I wonder what Ronnie sold to Gorbachev to get Daniloff and Iceland. The MX? The Abrams' tank plans? The Stealth program? Talk about encouraging terrorism. I'm surprised our allies aren't picking up Americans right and left to re-equip their armed forces. (Why not eliminate the middleman and let the *contras* get their own hostages?)

[No, Ronnie will get away with this one. There are too many channels and dummies to hide behind for anyone to get a really good picture of what went on. North and Poindexter are much better shields than Dean and Mitchell were (if any comparison can be made at all), and this case has the added appeal of patriotism, which has the Right convinced that the entire country has gone un-American. I have no doubt that Reagan at least knew and didn't stop it. If he honestly didn't know (which I'm certain he did) or was somehow let in on only a few parts (in effect, strung along and toyed with), then I am really worried about this country's leadership. I just can't wait for '88.]

I just read the front page of your zine—I said you didn't have to apologize, not become an egomaniac. This zine did not disappoint me at all! Sorry if you didn't get to put in all you wanted, but listen to the other publishers or you'll burn out! Slow down, you've got plenty of time. The Iran thing will be around for months and you can write about *Once Upon a Deadline* whenever you want. (I've read it so I know how hard putting a zine together is!)

[In case anyone was wondering, the first paragraph of the cover page of #2 was a joke. Really.]

Gary Coughlan

Oooooo!! Great second issue of *BI*. *[Thank you.]* I went to the library the Friday after it came out and found all four of the books you recommended and have been reading from all of them. You did give me trouble on one of them, though...Harald von Riekhoff's book. Everywhere, all over the card index file in the library, I looked for *Polish-German Relations, 1918-1933*.

No luck. I finally looked under the author's name and guess what, Bruce?!! There was the book but oddly enough it was everything you said it was (published in 1971, by the Johns Hopkins Press, by Riekhoff, etc.) with *one* exception. The name of the book is *German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933*. Must be, I say son, must be somebody's ethnocentricity am showing, y'all!

[I know what you mean. The nerve of that Riekhoff character, reversing the names like that! He really must be insecure about his national identity.]

Hope you enjoyed your Michigan holiday. *[It was a tad less restful than I'd expected it to be.]* I'm enjoying mine here just taking a breather from publishing until March. Well I guess that's all for now so I'll close and head out for work. Someone's got to work the mail today I guess....

Kevin Tighe

Regarding the unit specification in last issue's 85AQ game: I agree with your arguments but I disagree with your conclusion. Your argument centered on a person mislabeling an army for a fleet and vice-versa. But in the orders of F Nap-Rom, A Tus S Nap-Rom, where is the mislabeling? She obviously knew it was a fleet, or do you think she's confused about it being a non-unit? That really isn't the best way to write orders, but it certainly isn't confusing or ambiguous. This is akin to not accepting F Nwy-StP because a coast isn't specified. Sometimes a GM can be too strict.

Oh oh, I said the magic words, "strict GM." Langley said them last issue and you went off on a full-page harangue about sloppy orders, sloppy players, and a sloppily simple rulebook. I better watch my step.

[You certainly should. That includes not baiting your nice 'zine editor with inflammatory letters.]

Picture typical ftf Dip game: lots of talking to people in empty rooms and dark hallways, and then a mob rush to write down orders before the time is up. It's almost the same in pbm Dip; there's the mad flurry of letters or postcards to other players, waiting for their replies, and then a mad rush to write down orders because the last mail pickup is in five minutes and the post office is three blocks away. After a while, shorthand creeps into your order writing.

[Maybe yours, pal, but not mine. I don't play pbm Dip the way you do, I guess. Should I save myself the trouble of waiting and call a standby for you now? I sure wouldn't want to see you miss that last mail pickup.]

But then I find orders the least interesting part of the game. When I see a game I'm not in, I ignore the moves and map and go to the press, but that's my problem.

[I just skip all that and go straight to the gamenotes.]

As long as I'm writing I'd just like to say that you don't fool me about not being a computer snob. In the Peel letter you imply that there is a prerequisite for the appreciation of home computers which necessarily excludes "common people." Perhaps you believe that one must "work" for the pleasure

that home computing imparts (such as knowing hexadecimal notation or learning Pascal), and that this means some sort of sacrifice on the user's part. The logical extension of this argument is that to truly appreciate and use a home computer one must be able to write a binary program. Not only is this ridiculous, but it probably excludes even you. Were you aware of that? Probably not.

[Your gripe sounds a lot like the one Ken had (see below). However, the logic applicable to the operatic essay is not necessarily transferable to your home computer argument. The former is done for pleasure, while the latter is done out of necessity. One may get pleasure out of using a home computer, but the pleasure/enjoyment aspect is not what makes a person work on a computer in the first place (at least not in my case). When I write a paper on the Mac, I do it because I have to. I appreciate the manner in which my job is made easier, but this ease is not the end I seek in writing the paper. We are talking about two totally different things. If one uses a computer, say, just to play games, then of course one doesn't need to become intimately familiar with the computer one uses—that's not the point. However, when the computer becomes a tool used to perform a necessary task, familiarity with the tool becomes essential, or the entire project suffers. I admit that it does not hurt me personally if you don't know beans about the computer you use, but the fact that this society has become so dependent on "support services" bothers me. The philosophical implications of this sort of attitude bother me far more than the practical ones. And, sir, I adamantly stand behind my right to object on philosophical grounds. I also didn't mean to imply that I am some sort of computer genius—I'm not. However, I think it's important for people to know what they're dealing with.]

I just noticed that in your "2½ Commandments" that you don't accept implied orders. Well, that's pretty clear. I still don't agree, but they are your houserules, so I accept your adjudication of France's moves last season.

[Thanks, Kevin. I was worried whether or not you would make me take it back.]

Steve Langley

Blunt Instruments arrived and immediately went into Daf's stack of things to read. I only got it in time to come down with a cold and flu. The world is full of organisms which seem to want to destroy my body. A perfectly paranoid way of looking at things, but hey, I'm the one who is ill.

[You said it. I've been sick several times in this quarter alone, which is very unusual for me. Things look uncommonly bleak when one is stuck with an illness. I trust you have recovered by now. At least, I hope so.]

I read the House Rule discussion with great interest. *[Uh oh, another one of those types.]* One question occurs. If, as Mark Berch says, your houserules provide that any season's orders provide an automatic tentative set of orders for the following season, how are you justified in calling a standby player should the situation arise that the tentative orders are brought into play?

[The understanding is that the protection afforded by these tentative orders is for the units, but not for the player. They are not "tentative orders" in the strict sense of the term, I suppose. If you want to get technical, I think "Partial Tentative Orders" would be an appropriate term. That's not the point, really.]

In your response to my previous letter you say you don't know exactly what I mean by "strict" GMing. A perfect example of "strict" GMing can be found in your 1985AQ game. Your decision that A Tus S A Nap-Rom was ambiguous is what I consider "strict." I would not have failed that order in **Magus**. I let the units in play decide what is and what is not, not what may be or may not be written in a set of orders. I, like you, feel that the GM is doing a service to the players. Unlike you, I prefer to give a bit more service to my players. The contention that mislabeled units can only lead to confusion is one that I can't accept. It does not matter what the players say the unit is, it only matters what the unit is. I, as the GM, keep track of that information anyhow. I see no reason to punish my players for a momentary lapse of concentration in labeling their units or in writing their orders. Those that I consider "strict" see it differently.

[Fine. So if the players can label fleets as armies and vice versa whenever they want, why can't I? After all, it doesn't really matter what I say, just what the board says. In fact, why even adjudicate the game at all? Why not just collect the orders and send photocopies to all the players simultaneously. Surely, they can figure it out themselves. Why should I bother if the board is all that matters?]

None of the above has anything to do with how comprehensive a set of houserules might be. I doubt that any set of houserules can exactly cover every situation that might arise. I see nothing

wrong with making the attempt but tend to feel that it is a lost cause. None of the previous paragraph has anything to do with time spent in negotiation, either. I take it that your contention is that players who write organized orders spend more time in negotiation. I have no reason to believe that to be the case. What do you base your contention on?

[You have incorrectly stated my contention. I contend that players who spend more time on negotiations write more organized orders, which, if you'll note, is not exactly what you said. In any case, it's only logical. I know that in games in which I spend a lot of time negotiating, I make certain that my orders don't mess up whatever deals I've made by being sloppy. In games in which I have spent little time corresponding, I just scribble off some orders on a postcard and see what happens. Players that are interested in a game will take the time to see that their interests are looked after, while disinterested players will not. Looking after those interests involves organized orders. Makes sense, no?]

Bruce Linsey

Alas, the home I was looking to buy fell through. No big deal—there's always a wide variety out there from which to choose—but now I'll have to wait until at least summer to resume my search. (I refuse to change addresses in the middle of the Runestone Poll!)

[I'm sorry to hear about the house, Bruce. At least I'll be able to identify with that familiar Ashuelot Street address for a few more months. I know what you mean about address changes, though. I was worried enough about the impending vacation when I mailed the first issues of BI, not to mention the switch in apartment numbers. Fortunately, the mail seems to have taken care of itself.]

Let me dive right into your discussion of strict GMing. *[Whoa. Before we go on with this, let me just say that I didn't mean for my reply to Steve Langley last issue to mean that I was opening a forum on the meaning and implications of "strict GMing." That issue has been belabored enough elsewhere. However, as long as this doesn't become a trend, I'll live with it. With that firmly in mind, we can proceed.]* The term is not synonymous with comprehensive houserules. As an illustration of this point I offer Paul Rauterberg and Randolph Smyth. Paul once expressed the opinion that players should have to write out their orders in full—any abbreviations should be disallowed. This is an ultra-“strict” point of view, and yet he actually operated as a GM without (written) houserules. On the other hand, Randolph Smyth has pages and pages of houserules describing in great depth his very lenient GMing!

[Your logic doesn't follow here, Bruce. Although I have never played in Midlife Crisis, your choice of wording when referring to Paul's GMing leads me to believe that although he once expressed the opinion that no abbreviations should be accepted, he never enforced this as a GM, and it was actually not a rule of his, being rather an opinion that he held independent of his GMing. If this is the case, then Paul is not a relevant example, as his practice did not reflect his opinions. Randolph, on the other hand, while being a concrete example, doesn't apply, either. Your point is that a strict GM does not necessarily have comprehensive written houserules. However, Randolph is not a strict GM. Consequently, the fact that he does have comprehensive houserules is not relevant here, being rather an example of how lenient GMing does not preclude comprehensive houserules. You would have to show me a strict GM who, although strict in practice, operates with no written houserules, or at least very loose ones. And this, my friend, is something I can't imagine. As soon as a GM with no written houserules disallows a crucial order, I can see all hell breaking loose. With nothing to back him up before an ombudsman, I can't see his winning the case. After that, I can't see his continuing to operate without written houserules which define very clearly what he expects from his players.]

The question of the double order, hold and support, is one of strict GMing, not comprehensive houserules. The two orders are treated as distinct by the rulebook, and accordingly I (and most of the hobby, based on the results of a survey on the question) would consider said unit unordered.

[The thing that puzzles me is why a player would order a unit this way in the first place. To my mind, it implies an incomplete understanding of the rules.]

More generally, I'm with you all the way when you argue that if someone is going to take the time to play the game at all, there's no reason he can't take a little care in writing his orders. It is not an unreasonable requirement that each player write a complete and correct order for each unit. A well-played game requires several hours of negotiation time each month; why, then, is it considered unreasonable to ask players to take five minutes to get their orders into the correct format. I mean

really!

[Maybe because the next mail pickup is only three minutes away.]

The problem with lenient GMing is that once you start making corrections for your players, where do you stop? Fine—it's obvious this time that his "F Boh" is really "A Boh." Will it be just as obvious next season that his "A War" really referred to the army in Silesia? And after that, will it be obvious (from a tactical standpoint) that England doesn't want to bounce himself out of the North Sea in S'01, so the GM interprets "F Edi-Nor" to be "F Edi-Nwg"? How far can a GM legitimately go in terms of correcting (what he believes to be) a player's mistakes? And why should it be his job to bother?

[I agree with you here, and I'll tell you exactly why. By nature, I am probably the most lenient GM that ever existed. When I was running a two-day deadline game in my dorm last year, I would put up with just about anything. I would fix unit designations. I would ask players about ambiguous orders. I would even change the ordered location of a unit to correspond to its location on the mapboard, provided that the player had left a unit unordered, clearly identifying his mistake. Unfortunately, this leniency came back to haunt me. In the next game that I ran, there were a bunch of players who had never played Diplomacy before. One of these players, who was Turkey at the time, gave me the order "N Ank-Bla." "N"?? It took me a while before I realized he meant "navy" instead of "fleet." Figuring that he was a novice, I gave him the benefit of the doubt. "Only one possible meaning," right? Well, about ten minutes after the adjudication came out, that very player was knocking on my door, complaining. Yes, he had meant the "N" to mean "navy," but he had been counting on me to disallow it. It seemed that he had made an alliance with Austria against Russia, but then received an even better offer from Russia which made him decide to ally with him, instead. His original agreement with Austria, though, had his fleet moving to the Black Sea. Not wanting to tip Austria off, he wrote the order which he gave me, telling Russia what was going to happen. He was then going to explain to Austria (who was an experienced player) that he didn't know that fleets couldn't be called navies. I issued a correction sheet, but the Austrian figured it out, and the ploy didn't work. It all ended up with the Turk, under assault from an A/T alliance, giving up in disgust a few seasons later. The whole thing left me with a bad taste in my mouth, and the game ended up being marred by the incident. I decided that the only solution was to draw up some comprehensive houserules so that I would have as little leeway as possible in order interpretation.]

[I also considered following the rulebook very closely in my houserules. The "only one possible meaning" clause almost made me make a rule where a player could have a unit which didn't have its location specified correctly placed in the proper province, as long as another unit existed which the player hadn't ordered. However, I realized that this took away a player's ability to avoid keeping a promise by deliberately misordering a unit—a ploy I have seen used fairly frequently—without leaving two units unordered, making the ploy too costly to be effective. Also, if two units stood unordered and only one was misordered, could the disorder be corrected if one of the unordered units were an army and the misordered unit were a fleet? How about if the unit's identity were itself incorrectly written. Where would it be obvious that there was no longer "only one possible meaning"? In short, I think that it is only fair to the players for the GM to rule as strictly as possible. This prevents the misunderstandings which can too often ruin a game.]

Re: you first paragraph of response after Kevin Tighe's letter [*last issue*]: you'd better watch it, or people are going to think you're a clone of me! At least you could've chosen a different name, for gosh sake....

[Shhh! Are you trying to give it away? Be more careful, or people will figure out that you really control me by a radio-remote device in your kitchen.]

A spring con in Vermont looms as highly probable. I'm visiting Paul Gardner next weekend and will discuss it with him at that time. Glad to hear you'll be around for the encore!

[I just hope I can afford to take a plane out there this time. That bus ride was no fun at all. Actually, I had just better hope I can afford it, period.]*

*[*This was written and received before Paul indicated that he would rather not host another con this spring. I understand Paul's reasons completely, and am just sad that we won't be able to do it all over again.]*

Regarding 1985AQ: your game map is as good as any I've yet seen. And you are correct, in my opinion, to disallow the order A Tus S Nap-Rom. The question of whether the ruling has an effect on the game is not relevant.

[I never said that the effect had any relevance; I just feel worse when a ruling like that changes the outcome of the adjudication. Had it made no difference, no harm would have been done, everyone would have known in the future, and I wouldn't feel as bad.]

[Thanks for the map compliment. I really couldn't think of anything else to show on the map, aside from unit movements with arrows (which I don't think are aesthetically desirable) and territorial control by color (which I can't afford).]

I hope you will stick to your guns and continue to use Berch's WAP rule for NMR's. People are often afraid of new ideas—thus the controversy that this has generated—but to my way of thinking this is a perfectly legitimate way of reducing the devastation an NMR can wreak upon someone's position. Even if the BNC decides it's irregular—and I'll be writing to him to try and persuade him that it isn't—why not still use it? As long as your players don't mind playing under it, it's legit. The question of regularity is of secondary importance.

[The operative phrase is "as long as the players don't mind playing under it." I, personally, don't want to have anything to do with unratable games. However, if everyone wants to use the rule, I believe I have an obligation, regular or no. My personal opinion is that although the rule is an improvement over the old system, it isn't worth the tradeoff of regularity v. improved game. The improvement isn't that big.]

That's all for now. I'll look forward to seeing you in Vermont and Wisconsin!

Rodney Schmisser

I was rather curious to find out what you felt about the recent peace feelers in Afghanistan. While as I write the situation is deteriorating daily with threats of "fights to the death" ringing out from both sides, I still have a feeling that the Soviet hand in Afghanistan is not worth playing to a conclusion and that their presence is holding them back from exploiting the impotent foreign policy of this nation in the wake of the "whatever you want to name it" scandal. The suddenness of the Soviet change in stance after more than eight years of attrition in the Afghan hills seems much too abrupt for even as powerful a pragmatic political force as Gorbachev to have ushered in anew. The staid "cold-warriors" of the Politburo certainly see fruit ready for the taking in the Middle East and an opportunity to redress a situation which has been steadily deteriorating since the '73 war poked gaping holes in the Soviet military sales machine on the plains of Sinai and the Golan Heights with burnt out Soviet armor wrecks dotting the landscape. Soviet allies in the Middle East currently include the wasteland of Yemen, Syria, a few Lebanese factions, and Libya. With friends like that who needs enemies? But clearly the Soviets lack a major buyer in the region. Khaddafi would like to get his hands on anything he could but even Charlton Heston would admit that the Soviets have better sense than to give the Libyans anything that they couldn't go in after and take back, if need be.

While the Soviets would, I'm sure, prefer to increase their exports and sales of non-military hardware, especially since they have no markets in Western Europe militarily and could sell non-military goods to their military purchasers as well, military sales are certainly big ticket items and convert to many a kopeck of foreign exchange and movement in the Soviet domestic economy. Pulling out of Afghanistan would certainly ease the Soviet problem with Islam in the Arab-dominated Republics along the Asian border of the USSR; stop a bleeding ulcer of losses, both in terms of lives, military hardware losses, and the cost of waging that war in terms of ammunition and fuel; and free the Soviets' hands to re-enter the Middle East proper. The Afghan "side-show" is clearly detracting from the center stage of Soviet presence and influence in the Middle East. As events in the Gulf War turn more and more against Iraq, it further behooves the Soviets to cease alienating Islamic Soviets in the border republics when the real danger, the Islamic jihad state of Iran, lurks dangerously close.

It gave me a severe case of nausea one night in late November when I watched CBS News describe the various lengths to which some groups were going toward honoring those individuals in our government who placed us in the current foreign policy debacle we find ourselves immersed in. The College Republicans apparently went so far as to mint "Oliver North...Our American Hero" buttons to distribute on the nation's campuses. Fortunately, I have yet to see these disgusting relics of our shortsightedness on any campus around here. My mind, however disgusted it is by such events, is want to think back to the thousands upon thousands of dollars individuals such as G. Gordon Liddy have collected on the lecture circuits of this nation. Maybe one day soon Lt. Col. Oliver North will criss-cross the nation on a whirlwind tour describing how he "made the world safe again for

democracy," taking in a few hundred thousand dollars in the process and even developing a cult following à la Liddy. Sometimes this nation gets what it deserves.

Defenders of this administration will no doubt take me to task for these statements, but they should note that I have purposely said little or nothing regarding the legal and judicial aspects of who knew what when and who approved what. Those questions, while fascinating in their own right and no doubt to be the subject of scores of hours of television reports and hundreds of newspaper pages, are almost utterly meaningless in the big picture. Our foreign policy, for the remainder of the Reagan term, has been irreparably altered, and I feel irrecoverably damaged. The White House no longer leads, it reacts. The world no longer respects, it doubts. Much has been said of the spy cases where military secrets have been sold to the Soviets. As deplorable as these incidents were, the events of the last several months regarding the excesses and lack of accountability of the foreign policy of the United States, have affected this nation more than the mere selling of state secrets.

Oliver North...our American Hero??? Sometimes this nation deserves what it gets.

Sorry to end on such a sour note...oh well, it's only reality. **BI** is fantastic! Keep up the good work!!! Now if we can only get that third Dip gamestart and get into some serious fantasy!!!

[I think you have basically stated the essence of the circumstances surrounding the Soviet overtures. The Soviet leadership has had to deal with an increasingly unpleasant Afghan situation for too long, and the US-Iran fiasco gave them an incredible opportunity to take advantage of the unpredictable diplomatic makeup of the Middle East; the concurrence of the Soviet peace initiative and the American arms blunders leaves me with no other conclusion to make. Whether or not the Soviets would have made the same proposals had the Reagan administration not made its colossal foreign policy error is something I don't have the expertise to answer. Note, of course, that the Soviet withdrawal timetable is very long and drawn-out. This sort of "compromise" is nothing new from the Soviets. From the way the Afghan conflict was progressing, though, I think we would have seen something from the Soviets within a year, if not sooner.]

[I don't see Soviet concerns as giving much importance to the question of arms sales. The Soviets can always dump their old weapons on their satellites (at inflated prices), and can certainly redirect arms sales by the satellite countries (such as Czechoslovakia, which has a large stake in the African market) to suit their changing needs. I am wont to think back to the way in which the Soviets have manipulated their satellites' economies for so many years. Old habits die hard.]

[As far as North is concerned, I don't think that the conservatives can make a serious case for any alleged "heroism" on his part. The outrage over the revelations of the sales to the Iranians last fall (before the contra aspect was disclosed) makes it fairly evident that the nation isn't going to be duped into buying such fabrications. Some of it has to do with the Americans' visceral animosity towards Iran. Had North used some other country to launder the money destined for Nicaragua, he might have gotten more support. The fact that Iran directly benefitted from the sale hurts his case tremendously with the public, though certainly not for the same reasons that the diplomatic establishment loathes the exchange. Once they are implanted, animosities of this sort are difficult to uproot.]

[I don't see any Diplomacy gamestarts in the near future. The fantasy created by the three current games and Civilization will have to do for now, I'm afraid.]

Randy Grigsby

Received your first issue of **Blunt Instruments** yesterday. You sold me. Enclosed is a money order for my subscription. With your actively seeking Canadians, the coincidence that you are as new an editor as I am a *postal* player (until now I've only played chess by mail) and the fact that we have similar war-gaming backgrounds was enough for me to sub even if your first issue weren't of the *quality* that it was and your zine promises to be. Based on examples of seven other zines I've seen to date, **BI** has a realistic chance of breaking into the top ten of next year's Runestone Poll. Keep up the excellent work and best of luck on the success of **Blunt Instruments**.

On to politics. Since I am not American and I haven't even been living in North America for the last ten years, about the only news I ever receive on what is happening in America has to do with foreign and not domestic policies. I guess I am in the indifference category on the Democratic victory in the Congressional elections. Personally (if I could vote), I would vote for a liberal Republican or a conservative Democrat for Congress and a Republican for President. Thinking about it now, I can't think of one Democratic candidate since Kennedy that I would have voted for. Hart and Muskie don't

count since they didn't get the nomination.

As I already mentioned, I was a war-game buff in my misspent youth. My best friend and I bought nearly every game that Avalon Hill and SPI put out. After completing high school (grade 13 here in Ontario), I decided that I had enough of snow and cold and I was off to Israel to live. Regrettably, I gave away all of my games. Over the years in Israel, I discovered a few other ex-North Americans who had also dabbled in board games. In Israel, board games are non-existent, so whenever one of us went back to the old country to visit family, a game was brought back—usually multi-player. This continued until we reached the point that the new games were never played because we always played one of our three favourites. Those being *Diplomacy*, *Circus Maximus* and *Dune*. *Dune* was my personal favourite. Have you ever played it? [No.] If so, would you consider GMing? If not, *Dune* is a six player game based on Frank Herbert's book and made by Avalon Hill. With a bit of adjusting, I think it can be adopted to pbm. I would also be willing to play in a *Circus Maximus* game if you start one up. Regrettably (again), the games were left behind in Israel since I didn't come directly back to Canada. The only game I brought with me was my best chess set. Even my computer (Commodore 64) didn't make it here as I left it with my brother-in-law in South Africa.

[I have heard that Dune is not a very good game, but your apparent enthusiasm may very well make me reconsider my (admittedly uninformed) opinion. Circus Maximus is fun, but playing it by mail would be difficult. Not impossible, no, but it would probably require more time than I could devote to it. I would probably have to circulate game reports between the players on fairly frequent deadlines, and I just don't have the time. Perhaps there is an easier system, but I'm not aware of one.]

Richard Wheet

Thank you for your sample copy of *Blunt Instruments*. If your further endeavours toward your zeen are of similar quality, the readership should be well pleased. Your writing style seems quite articulate, as far as I can tell. Probably with time and patience (patience is the key), you will grow into an excellent editor. Remember the title "EDITOR." Let others do articles for your zeen and *edit*. When I was in college in the early '70s, I was editor-in-chief of our college yearbook for two years, and I learned the hard way.

[I don't think that the two cases are necessarily the same. Remember that the primary reason for this 'zine's existence is that it is a creative outlet for me. I enjoy printing outside submissions, but the general premise of publishing is a very self-centered one, anyway. Once my creativity starts getting squeezed out by outside submissions, the fun will start to dissipate, and you know what that means....]

I grew up on the north side of Chicago. I graduated from Lane Tech HS. Presently, I am the program chairman of the Nuclear Technology Department at Texas State Technical Institute. If you are really interested in physics, do it. The only way to tell if you're "a survivor" is to take a shot. I think you would be surprised at what these vaunted physics types are really like. They are not as smart as people have a tendency to believe. Remember they too are human. Most have only average to slightly above average intelligence. Most of these accomplishments are due to hard work, patience, and tenacity.

[Very few students at the University of Chicago are of "average intelligence." This university's physics department is universally recognized as being one of the two or three best in the nation (as are most of the departments here). The first-year physics sequence here starts out by doing Bernoulli equations by the second week of class. I think a lot of people don't understand how this school operates. To get a degree from here, you have to be good at what you do, not just persevering. Too many students here start out by persevering. They usually don't come back.]

Anyway, in regard to *Empires of the Middle Ages*, you might buy a copy from Nan's Games (or a similar name) in Houston, Texas. After looking for two years, I bought it at a convention in Houston sponsored by them last year. The game is in a baggie (no box) and costs \$30.00. They had, at the time, about 15 of them. They might still have them. I do not know their address. Try the phone directory. They do take mail orders.

[I called them. No luck. Rats.]

I am currently in an *EMA* postal game GMed by Robert Sacks. I just received our first 5 year turn. *EMA* seems to make a good pbm. If you wish to see a copy of the rules, I could send you one.

I am interested in playing various multi-player games (except Dip—I'm in four, and that's

enough). If you decide to start one of these, count me in.

[How about Civilization?]

P.S. I use an IBM-XT because it's free. I do like the Fat Mac. It is an excellent computer for those that are not "computer snobs." I use hand written letters because I'm a terrible typist (two fingers) and this is much faster.

[For more discussion of "computer snobbery," please see selected other parts of this issue. And let's leave it at that.]

Brian Kegerries

Greetings. I thoroughly enjoyed your N. J. #1 **BI**. I like your style and hope you keep up the good work.

I'll tell you a little about myself: I am an avid wargamer, and have a hard time "finding" opponents. I'd like to see a 'zine with chess games in it also. I don't think that would be too hard?

[Housing a postal chess game would be an interesting idea, but would probably be rather tedious at one move every month or so. I could put out a flyer, but why GM something that can easily be played by two people directly. Perhaps an announcement that any BI subbers who are interested in postal chess can find an opponent in you would be sufficient to get some inquiries?]

Of course, being a hardcore military policeman, my political views are a tad to the right of yours. Though I'm not a staunch Reagan supporter, I do believe might makes right to some extent. At least might makes the right to live in peace a surety.

Hitler's War may not be a bad pbm game—or maybe *Pax Brit*.

[Well, Civ is apparently OK with you, as you're signed up. I'm glad I'll be running a game you like.]

Bob O'Donnell

Thank you for sending your first issue of **Blunt Instruments**. Kind of you.

I am happy to make your acquaintance. How are things in "far off" Chicago? Understand that Chicago got some snow?!

[Chicago never gets enough snow. Mostly it's just terribly cold and windy. When we do get snow, it usually melts within a few days due to all the asphalt. More's the pity, too, as it means I have to go up to Wisconsin to cross-county ski.]

I would like to "sub" to your "zine"; enclosed please find a \$10 money order. I enjoyed your "zine" very much. Your "**BI** Profile" was good; also your review of "Bruxcon/Tomatocon '86" was excellent! I envy you, because I have never met Bruce Linsey, Steve Hutton, Alan Stewart, or Paul Gardner, and you have! Oh well, perhaps at Madcon, which I hope to be able to attend. I believe you hope to be there; it would be nice to meet you also!

[The date change seriously upset my Dipcon plans. The original date was exactly one week after classes end. The current date is the weekend before the last week of classes, or the second to last weekend before finals. I'm still planning on being there, but it's no longer for certain.]

I must say that your "zine" sounds quite different, and I hope to have the honor to receive it for some time to come.

Since you gave a short "bio" on yourself, here is a short one on me:

Place of Residence: Bonanza, Oregon. Founded by a Mr. I. D. Chandler. Current population: 280. Site of "spring" fed river. Founded in 1873.

Age: 35, soon to be 36. Birthday is December 31.

Born: Rigby, Idaho.

Education: Just high school; no M.A.'s, B.A.'s or any other letters.

Was in the U.S. Army for 4 years, but was too much of a "problem" for the Army and I have been barred from re-enlistment. Was a 92-B-10, which is a front-line medic. Was on orders for Vietnam, but when I got to Oakland Army Base, the Army (in its wisdom) sent me to Germany—F.D.R., of course. Was there for two years and had what has become the best time of my life. At least that's true so far.

Have lived in Oregon since I was twelve years old. Enjoy Oregon very much: the best state in the Union! "O Columbia, Gem of the Ocean" state song; western meadow lark, state bird; Oregon

grape, state plant; and Thunder Egg is the state rock. We have a state insect, but can't recall what it is right now.

I am also a history buff; enjoy any time or place, but really enjoy European from 1300 to now.

I understand the hatred that the Poles feel for the Austrians, Germans, and of course the big Russians! Of course, if my country had been eaten up piecemeal, I would be just as angry.

Randolph Smyth

Enjoyed the first issue of *BI*, recently arrived. Comments, in no particular order:

1) I'm afraid you're right about Slavic literature not translating very well. At least, after reading the major works of Russian novelists (Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Pasternak)—in English translation, of course—I preferred second-rank English and French writers and wondered how these guys ever got acclaimed "great." The only non-Russian stuff I ever read was *The Good Soldier Svejk* (Hasek)—in fact, I plagiarized some of the illustrations to brighten up the pages of some early *FSFs*—but again, if it was supposed to be funny, I remember thinking that I could write funnier stuff myself. Now, though, I'm fairly sure that my problem with all those writers is just one of translation.

[Or perhaps it is a case of the work in question no longer being socially relevant, or being relevant to an entirely different social milieu. Gogol's Dead Souls was, in Gogol's mind, an instrument of change directed at the whole of Russian society. The effect of the book was, in fact, dramatic, but at the time the reality of Russian life was seriously out of balance with, and beyond the control of, enlightened Russian thought represented by the intelligentsia. Literature was once a very powerful tool for social change. Perhaps it still is, although certainly not in the same form or to the same degree. Likewise, modern Russian literature addresses problems completely foreign to the American mind. This incomprehensibility is frustrating, yes, and contributes to the boredom felt by modern or foreign readers.]

[Svejk is a masterpiece. Perhaps you may be able to write funnier material now, but I doubt you could have approached Hasek's form at the time that he wrote it. Literature develops, and a style that you think is funny now would have sounded stupid then. This is just another example of the susceptibility of satire to aging. How about Swift's Modest Proposal, then? Boring, as far as I'm concerned. I could have written funnier stuff myself.]

2) If I were looking around for another *Diplomacy* game, I'd give very serious consideration to making it in *BI*. Unfortunately, my other commitments this year are making me feel badly about my participation in the games that I am in. I may have joined my last postal game, ever....

[That's a real shame, Randolph. I hope you change your mind about this. I know how you feel about outside commitments, though.]

3) While I'm interested in political discussions (Soapbox, etc.), my comments would either be rather critical of the U.S. system, or reveal my ignorance (probably both). So I don't expect to have much to say unless I'm twiggled by one of your other contributors.

Baron Powell

I enjoyed *Blunt Instruments* #1 very much. Please begin my subscription with *BI* #2. For now, I wish only to enjoy your humor and keep in touch with the goings-on in the hobby. I'm engaged in a game of *Diplomacy* right now (*Graustark* 1986AZ as Austria-Hungary) and also a pbm *Third Reich* (I always was a glutton for punishment!) and between the two of them and my job (who says slavery is dead?), I'm kept busy. I hope to contribute some material down the road, but I won't make a promise I can't keep.

Among my stranger habits, I've been working on a *GOOD* simulation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* for the last 4½ years. With the help of a friend (my *Third Reich* partner and gaming genius Mike McCoy), I think I've come up with something pretty good. The map and playing aids are locked in stone (of course I've said this before) and the rules need only some minor touch-ups (such as an index, credits, etc.). My problem is one of production. While I can generate rules easily with my word processor, the map and playing aids, particularly the counters, are another matter. Drawing full-size maps takes me *FOREVER* and using counters from other games is somewhat tacky (Uruk-hai in Napoleonic garb doesn't cut it!). I turn to you for help and/or suggestions since 1) you seem to have your act together and 2) you have contact with people in the "know." By the way, I took on this

project because I'm a gaming fan *and* a Tolkien fan and the Tolkien games on the market (such as SPI's *War of the Ring*) do such a *poor* job of capturing the spirit of the *Lord of the Rings*, I knew I could do better myself. I have no plans to market the game right now (too many copyright problems), but I've played with a few friends and they want copies of the game for themselves. I'm willing to spend some money myself to get something put out. **HELP!**

If you're even a teensy-weensy bit interested, I'd be delighted to send you a copy of the rules (and maybe a small map, too). I would enjoy comments on rule composition and clarity, and you seem quite qualified. Of course, you may not be at all interested (not interested in Tolkien—egad!). That's OK; I won't hate you forever. I would like to hear from you if you can offer any ideas.

I'll be standing by my mailbox waiting for my first issue of **BI**.

[I hope that this letter will be read by someone who might have some ideas to offer Baron about getting some components made. I remember that a few years ago the American Wargaming Association had a deal where they would help aspiring game designers get their designs printed with professional-quality components on a limited print run, as well as assistance in marketing (with attendant royalties). I was once going to take advantage of this service to publish a design of my own about the Battle of Grunwald, but never followed through. I have no idea whether or not this offer still exists. If anyone has any further information, please let me know.]

Ken Peel

Received **Blunt Instruments** #2 today. As fate would have it, I just mailed off the January issue of *Politesse* this morning. As per our understanding, please find enclosed \$10 to start my sub to **BI**. You may enjoy the 'zine I sent you today for what it is: the fourth Mac/LaserWriter combo 'zine in Dipdom. (Martin was first with *House of Lords*, you were second with *Blunt Instruments*, Martin was third with *Retaliation*, and here I am, fourth—drats, I guess that makes me just out of the running...)

[You mean that there's a prize for this?]

Yeah, Hurwitz is the absolute off-the-wallest. Nobody, but nobody writes like him, and, for whatever blessed reason, *Politesse* happens to be one of the three 'zines that Hurwitz blesses with his prose (others: *Graustark* and *Praxis*—although with the latter case, it is more of a way of fooling the pubber into granting him an eternal free sub, but don't tell Stewart. What, this in print? Oh well, blew that one... If you would like back issues of *Politesse* that contain some really outrageous Hurwitz concoctions, just let me know.) So here is what to do to get some more of those bizarre/hilarious letters and articles from Hurwitz: call his submissions "articles" and give him one sub credit for each submission that he sends you. That should do the trick. Go ahead. Try it, and see what happens. Maybe you, too, will someday be so lucky as to have the best writer this side of Transylvania as 'zine mascot!

[I take it, then, that I am on the other side of Transylvania?]

If you want to talk about the Iran/*contra* controversy next issue, you may feel free to use my column on that subject at the back of the December *Politesse* ("The Congressional Page") as a submission to **BI**. As you wish.

[Thank you, Ken. Although I really enjoyed that section, I am having problems fitting everything I want to include into BI as it is. Original material usually takes precedence over reprints, and I have a small bit of original stuff in the works. Too many ideas, not enough space!]

[By the way, has anyone noticed that ever since the guerrilla war in Nicaragua became big news, news announcers have been trying to pronounce "contra" and "Nicaragua" with (bad) Spanish accents? It seems that these people believe that Anglicization is somehow incorrect. Strange....]

As opposed to some of the others who said your inaugural issue was absolutely, positively, the best they had ever seen, I hope you will notice that I said it was *among* the best I have ever seen. If the truth be told, I still like *Praxis* #1 the best. Don't know why—the thing just stuck a chord of some kind. But if it is all the same to you, **BI** was right up there at second place. One thing I have noticed is that quality of form can often compensate for mediocrity of substance—to a point. Now, I am not claiming that **BI** #1 was weak substance-wise, but from the tenor of some of your letters, I would guess that some had never experienced the marvels of laser printing before.

[No need to apologize, Ken. I completely agree with you. I make no secret of the fact that if I were ever pressed to name a "favorite" 'zine, I would (under extreme duress) blurt out, "Praxis!"]

If I had to actually know programming, I would have fixed my Smith-Corona instead (seriously, my Coronamatic broke, and I was faced with a choice: buy a new electric typer, or buy a computer). I see the situation as the same as car ownership. Although I don't currently own a car, I have owned several in the past, and expect to buy another one later this year. I know virtually nothing about the insides of an automobile, and have no interest in learning more. If I blow a tire, I can put on a new one, and that is about it.

The situation with privately-owned computers is actually much less serious. As with ignorant car-ownership, I can expect to spend somewhat more over the long term for my ignorance. But *so what* if my computer breaks and I have to stare at a blank screen? That means that it's time to take it into the shop, that's all. Your computer diletantism sounds somewhat like your blast of the opera snob. Do you really mean that computers are only for the few, the initiated, the elite? Hey, I know enough to use Fedit and MacTools to at least a limited extent (I managed to save myself from retyping about 36 pages by reclaiming from the netherworlds a serious deletion mistake)...and that is about all I presently plan to learn. So, I make a lot of back-ups. That's my problem, not yours.

[No, Ken, it really isn't. I suppose that from a strictly utilitarian point of view you could make a case for the exclusive effect this has on you as opposed to others, but that is not my point. From a philosophical perspective, your problem is simply indicative of a general trend in this society towards extreme "service-dependency." While this may be fine for you as a person, I think that the stratification that this creates when applied as a universal truism does more harm than you think. I do not dispute your claim that you can just "go and get it fixed." The implications of such an attitude, however, I find more difficult to accept.]

[In any case, both you and Kevin Tighe made the mistake of comparing my opinion on the operatic question with my view on computers. The application is not the same because my perception of these two things fundamentally differs. Unlike you, I would prefer to use a good electronic typewriter. The reason is primarily one of convenience: I would much rather do this at home in the comfort of my apartment than be stuck in this sterile lab. I could listen to the radio and type at the same time. I could eat. It would be much more fun.]

[However, I have chosen the Mac simply because it allows me to increase my productivity. I can do more work in a shorter period of time, and I can fit more words onto a page, thus saving me postage/photocopying money, and making this whole operation more efficient. Even if I could produce this entire thing at home on an ImageWriter, I would probably opt for my present setup, simply due to considerations of aesthetics and efficiency. No, Ken, this Mac does not increase the pleasure I get out of BI (or writing in general). It increases my productivity. That is all that I care about.]

[The opera, on the other hand, is attended for enjoyment. Were I using this Mac to play games, your comparison would be much more applicable. For me, however, work and play are very separate things. This is not to say that I do not get enjoyment out of BI—that is my primary purpose. However, I could have just as much fun (if not more) with my typer. The comparison, then, is invalid.]

I hope that this letter didn't sound negative. I enjoyed **BI** #2 even more than #1, and I don't wish to seem to be getting in a debating game (read: spread) with you in your own letter column. Feel free to edit out whatever you consider personal. I guess that the computer biz just hit a vulnerable nerve of mine. You are probably right that for my own good I should be more computer literate. But I am not. Does this make me less of a person?

[Of course not, Ken. Don't be silly. I hope you now understand what my position is on this computer question. That isn't really important, though. Without sounding too corny, I am very glad that I got the chance to meet people like you through BI, as that is what really makes this thing a pleasure to do. Please continue to write letters like the previous ones. I love good mail.]

Wishing you and **Blunt Instruments** the absolute best for 1987.

[Thanks. Write soon!]

Paul Mills

Hi! You must be a bit surprised to get a reply to your sample three months later but I think the reason for the delay will be quite interesting, but we'll put that off for later.

[No doubt it's more interesting that my excuse for being late with this issue, but then late 'zines all

(although this opinion is being tested by Alan's continued pornographic tendencies). During the production of **BI** #1, I kept flipping through the pages of **Praxis** #1, in utter despair because I could never hope to even come close to what Alan did with his first issue. This was part of the reason for my self-criticism in #1. As I look back on this, I guess it really doesn't matter. Our two efforts were rather dissimilar in terms of approach, and this can only be for the best. I know I loved **Praxis** #1 when I got it!]

I would like to expand on what I had to say last issue on the game *Balance of Power*. Perhaps I was overly flippant in using the phrase "knee-jerk liberal." I meant the tone of the letter to be one of somewhat wild abandon, but I, too, share your general wimpishness, and I certainly did not intend to issue any ideological slur. For your own information, my politics are strenuously centrist/moderate (to the extent that they can be categorized at all). My upbringing is strongly Democratic, although I now find myself working for one of the leaders of the moderate wing of House Republicans (Olympia Snowe of Maine). So in that sense, I really have become a Republican, and my politics are certainly more to the right than they were in my earlier years. However, I deem both the liberal and the conservative centers of gravity in American politics to be seriously flawed in a number of different respects.

Here, I speak mainly in terms of foreign and defense policy, which are my areas of primary political interest. [Mine, too.] But no need to go into that now. [Perhaps later, Ken? I would be fascinated to hear more from you about this.] My point here is that in using the phrase "knee-jerk liberal" I was merely quoting a phrase from an actual review of *Balance of Power* (a positive review, at that). I think very highly of the intent of *Balance of Power*. I think that the concept of the game is innovative, and admirable—as you may notice from my own gaming interests in *Politesse*, I strenuously avoid traditional hexish wargames because I have no interest in games that attempt to make palatable the horrors of modern mechanized war (you can have your bugaboos with nuclear holocaust and I can have my aversions to battle simulations). So in that vein, no, I have never had to sit through a turn of *Drive on Stalingrad*, and never intend to. I would probably find that about as interesting as *Balance of Power*. I never meant to depreciate the concepts behind the game *Balance of Power*, but to depreciate its actual playability as a game, which in my view is how a game ought to be judged. My condescension toward some of the rave reviews the game has received was my feeling, which I retain, that many reviewers were so taken by the innovation and imagination that went into the concepts behind the game, that they failed to judge it fairly on its own merits as a playable piece of (let's be frank about it) entertainment software.

To me, the game is simply boring. Perhaps I am overly harsh, because I had expected much more. But I accept that tastes differ, and there may be some aspects of the game that I do not fully appreciate because of my own peculiar tastes. To me, though, it is like a "coffee table" book: something to be purchased more to look at on the shelf than to actually read.

[I think what this comes down to is one's tolerance for tedium in a simulation. If I am playing *Survive!* or *Awful Green Things*, I don't want tedium, I want excitement. However, when I play *BOP*, I am willing to put up with long, drawn-out turns for the sake of the simulation. In fact, once I get involved in the game, I barely notice it. Perhaps it is due to the fact that I have been able, over the years, to train my mind to "shut off," so to speak, when performing tedious or automatic tasks. In this sense, perhaps we perceive the game's flow differently. I don't find it that tedious.]

No No No!!! You made the unpardonable error to someone associated with the House Foreign Affairs Committee by calling it by its better-known Senate counterpart, the Foreign Relations Committee. Hey, we've got inferiority complexes, I'll admit it (but never to a Senate staffer).

This is much too long already, and I urge you to freely edit this as you would like (although, of course, I'll blast you for it later). I would, however, like to make one final comment on your nostalgia for the days when someone who owned a computer had to learn at least a minimal amount of programming. Thank the Lord Almighty that that day is finally gone, I say. I freely admit my limitations, not so much in abilities as in interest. Who knows, maybe someday I'll get an interest in really learning the guts of computers, but that day certainly isn't today. Nor is it likely to be tomorrow. Does that mean that I should be excluded from the real consumer interests of computer ownership? You'll notice, I hope, that I am honest and don't mention first the productivity gains of computers. I didn't buy the thing to increase my productivity, or, for that matter, for the kids, (not that I currently have any, though). I bought it for the same reason that most individuals buy them, whether they are willing to admit it or not: for word processing and for entertainment.

have the same excuses. You certainly don't have to apologize!]

First off, I've enclosed \$2.20 in check form for two issues. I'm probably going to buy issues piecemeal like this barring a major windfall. Do you have back issues available for purchase? I'd like to have some continuity.

[You'll probably be surprised that you only missed one issue in the interim! You obviously have #1; #2 is enclosed in the interests of "continuity." Oh, it's on me.]

Just recently I purchased *Once Upon a Deadline* from Bruce Linsey and in a letter he encouraged me to check out *BI*. He just asked me to mention his name, so I did.

Now, the, for the explanation. Well, the obvious one is a lack of funds (which was true, at the time). But there's a more compelling reason. In my initial letter to you, I lambasted the Soviets as first-class imperialists (which I still believe) and asserted that they are bent on world domination. After I'd written quite a bit on the subject, an irrational fear began to form in my mind. What if the KGB read this, and through their network, were then able to ensure my life was difficult. The notion became overwhelming, so I trashed the letter and decided my own self-interests were more important than expressing my opinions. I put the issue of writing to you out of my thoughts. At the time I'd decided to destroy the letter I had viewed that entity of the Eurasian landmass as an omniscient power. I had a hatred for them and whenever I asked myself why I had some pat answers which I can't remember now. Well, this month I read a book again and it gave me a new view on things. I realize now that the state on the European and Asian continents is not the U.S.S.R., but the Russian Empire, with the General Secretary as the new "little father." (By the way, the "little father" bit is a brazen showing-off of knowledge.) And I've come to recognize the Russians of this period as people with fears, albeit somewhat paranoid. Then again, maybe not so paranoid after I think about it. And yes, they're not omniscient nor omnipotent.

[Your comment that "[your] self-interests were more important than expressing [your] opinions" is a telling one from a philosophical perspective. Such attitudes run rampant among Party functionaries before the major outbreaks of revolt in Eastern Europe, and still persist in the form of long-since disillusioned ideologues. The problem is that the necessity of power politics precludes the overriding of this self-interest. I assume, though, that your KGB "fears" are a joke.

[The analogy between the Russian Empire and the USSR is certainly a valid one, but the nature of Soviet politics prevents the same sort of "Little Father" mentality that was achieved during tsarist times. With the increased sophistication of the Soviet populace and the firm defeat dealt to the "cult of personality," individual control over the Party apparatus is much more difficult now.

[By the way, your use of the term "hatred" is interesting. I don't believe that Americans can really "hate" the Russians the way the purpprt to, simply because the Russians have done them no direct harm. As much dislike or anger that one feels for their behavior, it's too easy to forget everything and lose oneself in the high standard of living Americans enjoy. To truly hate the Russians, one has to have their influence dictate one's life, day after day.

An interesting sidelight: as I was reading this book (oh, the title is *A Quick and Dirty Guide to War*, and it's great for explaining any world hotspot) it mentioned, and I quote, "now the Poles, a constant source of Russian paranoia, are simmering." What exactly has happened between Russia and Poland that warrants the "paranoia" comment? I'd always thought of Poland as the victim, except in 1919-20. Speaking of that period, did you ever see the game *White Eagle/Red Star* by GDW?

[Poland and Russia have a history of constant enmity, even hatred. This dates back as far as the Kievan period. In the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries (as well as part of the seventeenth), Poland was the largest and most powerful country in Europe. The entire Ukraine belonged to Poland, as well as much of Bielorrussia, and Muscovy was constantly at war with the Mongols, Tatars, Swedes, and Poles, among others. Even when Poland's internal structure (easily the most democratic and libertarian in Europe) proved itself inadequate in an age ruled by absolutism, the Poles fought the Russians in a series of bloody uprisings. How would Americans feel if Mexico were a nation filled with eternal hatred for the United States, and had an army roughly equivalent in equipment and training held in check only by political necessity? Poland was willing to initiate a bloodbath in 1830 in the hope of freeing itself from Russian domination; the Russians wonder how many more such bloodbaths they'll have to endure. Russian thinking is further permeated by the memory of the destruction of 1941-44, and the extent to which they set about preventing a repeat testifies to the powerful force of this experience. Gomulka and Cyrankiewicz were able to literally boot the Russian delegation out of Warsaw in '56, thus forcing major concessions out of Moscow and

causing them to back down from the threat of the use of military force. Poland is capable of causing the Russians serious problems, as 1980-81 showed. The cause for Russian paranoia seems obvious.

[I do indeed own GDW's Red Star/White Eagle. (White Eagle/Red Star is the name of the only major English book on the war, and I presume that GDW simply reversed the title so as to avoid copyright problems.)]

I believe in your first issue you said we could suggest multi-player games as possibilities. One that I think would be enjoyable is *Pearl Harbor: the War Against Japan, 1941-1945*. It includes the following "nations": The United States Army and Navy, the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy, Great Britain, the ANZACs, the Kuomintang forces and Mao Tse-Tung's armies. Last but not least, the USSR. If there's some interest, some of the smaller powers could be combined.

[I assume that you are referring to the GDW game. While it is certainly not bad, there has been some discussion about a possible revision of what are seen as bad supply rules, and a general rulebook overhaul was suggested at one point. Further, I have had enough "hex-game" GMing for some time. In my high school days, I ran several games of Flat Top, Third Reich, and even tried Fire in the East once (it failed, due to my own inability to cope with it). Thanks for the interest, though.]

Currently in the world of Dip I'm in 1986CU (Curare) in Dick Martin's *zeen Retaliation*. Plus I've joined a new game in there. I think you know one of the players in my game, Bob Gossage. Well, I hope he proves to be a good ally/enemy/partner in your variant "Balkan Wars III" in Fred Davis' *zeen*.

[So Martin has infected you with his spelling, eh? Too bad....]

Oh yes. Now it's time for a "Buckwheat Profile." I'm a junior in high school (Waubonsie Valley, to be specific) and I like history and German, and in the latter I'm currently enrolled in my third year of it. Lord, I feel like I'm filling out a form for a game show.

Speaking of school, which programs is the University of Chicago noted for? It's one of the places I'd like to attend.

[Chicago is noted for just about everything. If you're into history, the history department is one the nation's strongest. The sciences, particularly physics and math, are probably tops in the country. If you're not interested in things like engineering or computer science (we don't have the former, and the latter is only offered as a graduate program, as they are considered to be too "non-intellectual"), and would like a highly theoretical approach to your field, Chicago is probably the place to go.

[There are problems, though. One is the price (nearly \$17,000 a year). Another is the difficulty. If you come here, they are going to make you work. This is not to imply that you are not capable of it, but is just offered as a warning about what is really a "unique" university atmosphere. The pressure here is strong, bordering on oppressive. In addition, the general tendency of the student body is to magnify this pressure through an attitude which can only be as "Chicagoan". I would strongly advise anyone who wants to attend Chicago to weigh these factors carefully. Had I known how difficult the school was, I probably would have found a way to make up the balance towards Yale's financial aid award (they offered me some, but not enough). The benefits are that graduate schools rate this university very highly, and even a mediocre GPA from here is impressive elsewhere. The Chicago degree itself is held in high regard by employers as well, and recruitment on campus is very strong. One just has to consider the trade-offs.

[The graduate schools are what this university is really known for, though, both in this country and abroad. Our friends overseas never fail to be impressed when they find out that I am going to school here, even if their reactions are based on their knowledge of the graduate programs, and they know nothing about the College.]

[German, by the way, is not one of our better languages. (Russian, Polish, Czech, Chinese, and Japanese are, among others.)]

I'm not sure if Bob told you, but a few of us from Dick's *zeen* are independently organizing an *Axis & Allies* game by mail. If you're interested, Scott Johnson (10 Heathcote Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583) is our GM. I think we have a full complement of players, but I'm not positive and, as you say, standbys are welcome. (I think. You'd have to check with Scott.)

[Thanks for the invitation, but when you add up the number of games that I'm playing and GMing, you get quite a number. I'll have to pass, but perhaps someone else out there is interested?]

Well, that's about it. I'm off to watch "Amerika" and think of a short story idea.

[Huh? Kafka on television?]

Rod Walker

As I begin this letter, I'm listening to Salieri's "Variazione Sull' Aria 'La Folla di Spagna'", which will no doubt tell you where I'm coming from, musically. I can't thank you enough for sending **BI** #1 my way. I enjoyed it quite a bit and enclosed (I hope) is my check for \$10 for the next 10 issues. I look forward to some stimulating reading—although what you have to say in #1 leads me to beg you *not* to carry out your threat to let the readers do the writing. Time was that the hobby had many good-reading 'zines. They still show up occasionally, but not in such great numbers. **Voice of Doom** is gone, alas; and **No Fixed Address** is fixing to fold, double alas! **Graustark** has long since degenerated to a dim and crabbed reflection of what it was. We have **Costa**, but Conrad (like me) comes and goes, so this won't be forever. There's **Bushwacker**, but it's got bad space limitations. **Praxis** is good. But what else? The good, literate 'zine put out by somebody who has a reasonable command of English is very rare. I wish I had time to put out **Erehwon**, but I can't presently generate enough free time to take on any publishing duties. (Of which more anon.) So the appearance of **BI** is a breath of fresh air in a hobby dominated by less-than-ideally-literate publishers. (I don't demand deathless prose, but I do expect little things such as subject-verb agreement; know what I mean?)

*[That's some pretty select company you have me in, Rod, and that's just after reading the first issue! Your comment about "overriding perfectionism" in your second letter—see below—is just the sort of thing that I am going to worry about, after seeing such high praise from people such as you. I hate to disappoint people. I realize that some people may have read the first issue, liked it, and expected something from **BI** that I really had no intention of doing. Disappointment due to the fact that I failed to follow through properly on something that I wanted to provide and that people were enjoying, though, is another matter. Forgive me, then, if I sometimes seem overly self-conscious.]*

Since I hope to be a regular reader and possibly a regular contributor [*Oh, goody!*], I guess I'll tell you a bit about myself. I've been in and out of the postal **Diplomacy** hobby since 1966 and published a few dozen 'zines of various sorts. My primary 'zine was/is **Erehwon**, which even did a 4-issue stint outside **Diplomacy**, as a poetry biannual (issues 101-104). I had to abandon my enterprise aiming at becoming a major voice for "lucid verse" (poetry which actually had structure and which could actually be understood) because the time and, even more, the money just weren't there. Poetry is a main interest of mine, but I write very little these days because there's really no hope for significant publication: the important outlets are dominated by the academic-elitist style (which is degenerate, sterile, and unreadable) or by poetry which is so characterized by extremes of introspection, symbolism, and politicization that its pretensions to being "people's poetry" are so much vapid hype. As a result, poetry which can move into a genuine, open marketplace is virtually extinct. [End of soapbox harangue.] I'm also into limericks, and have a book looking for a publisher, *The Ravish'd Muse*. I also plan to devote some issue of my **Erehwon** subzine to limericks and to revive a hobby limerick contest I'd barely announced when **Erehwon** had to fold as an independent publication.

[I, unfortunately, am not terribly interested in poetry. This is not to say that I do not enjoy good poetry when I read it, but rather that I don't have the inclination to search out good poetry in the first place. T.S. Eliot is a notable exception, but in that case I actually just stumbled upon his better works unintentionally. My knowledge of Russian is not yet such that I can really appreciate Pushkin. As for others, I have never actually tried very hard to broaden my horizons. In any case, I am not exactly qualified to comment on your attack on the established school of poetic style. Let it suffice for me to say that while I understand your criticism, I think that you are might be judging a little too harshly a trend that, while perhaps excessive, is based on some sound principles. The academic circles of poetry are not based on fluff and incomprehensibility. The only problem is that they have strayed too far from the path of communication, which must be the primary objective of all verse (and all writing, for that matter). Counter-reaction can be a bad thing.]

{By the way, you're welcome to publish **Erehwon** as a subzine, too, if you wish. Should that be so, let me know & I'll send you clear xerox masters, since **Erehwon** is camera-ready in 8¹/₂x11" format.}

*[My problem is one of space. I would love to carry **Erehwon**, but only if it were on an irregular basis. I just can't fit everything I want into an issue as it is.]*

I envy your apparent facility with languages. I'm not at all good with them. I can read enough

Latin, the romance language, German, and Egyptian for my own purposes, but I'm not into nuances or idioms particularly. (You may wonder about the Egyptian. I have in the works a very peculiar—and probably not commercial—novel. The final text should be about 250,000 words, all written in the first person. It's supposed to be a translation of an original document; about 5% of the text will be poetry; there are extensive footnotes which [a] add to the illusion of authenticity and [b] help me explain things to the reader which would be intrusive in the main text. So I had to learn something about the language and literature of the place/time. In the process, I'm having to invent an Egyptian slang and a whole vocabulary for the lower classes, as well as a whole style of poetry (since, for the period of my novel—late 12th Dynasty—there are no known surviving poems; I'm using the well-attested New Kingdom style and making it less sophisticated and moving it in the direction of the also well-attested older Canaanite style).

Next big interest: fictional geography. This is a field which primarily relates to sf/fantasy, but a great deal of mainstream fiction and other books are also set in nonreal places (I'm only interested if the text gives enough details to make a map). For instance, around the turn of the century there was a craze for romantic novels set in nonreal European monarchies. There were 5 Graustark novels, and 3 set in Ruritania. I have published 6 issues of a 'zine on the subject, *Pellennorath*, abandoned some years back but which I plan to revive (including reediting and republishing the earlier issues). I have a collection of several hundred books (a few of them quite rare) which relate to this subject. This seems to be an idea peculiar to English literature, insofar as I can tell. Outside English, settings in fictional countries seem to be generalized backdrops only, without much (or any) geographical detail. There seem to be a few Spanish and French works that might be exceptions, but I've not been able to find copies of them yet. The only writer of Slavic background who dabbles in geographically well-defined nonreal countries is Vladimir Nabokov. I've done a map of Zembla (*Pale Fire*, possibly his most original work) [*but certainly not his best*]; I haven't yet tried Estotiland (*Ada*) or any of his others. But, of course, in these Nabokov was writing in English, of which he had a superb command, to the point of being one of serious literature's most outrageous punsters! If you know of any Slavic works which fit this interest, I'd really like to know what they are (especially if they exist in English translation).

[You are probably right that this is a phenomenon peculiar to English literature, as I have not run across anything of the sort in Slavic works, and certainly not as a general trend. I understand your interest in fictional geography (geographical fascination is very interesting, psychologically), and would love to see any part of any issue of Pellennorath which you might be able to xerox for me. If and when you do restart it, please inform me immediately!]

Since you're into music and from Poland: Chopin is OK by me, but I find his music a little too saccharine to take in large doses. I've just discovered Szymanowski (the Dorati recording of symphonies 2/3) and like what I've heard thus far. Lutoslawski and Penderecki don't reach me at all; I find them opaque and unapproachable, with musical material running the gamut from bland to ugly. I'm not an anti-modernist (I'm into Janacek, Shostakovich, Bax, Orff, Honegger, Martinu, Poulenc, and all that). But when music is atonal and atonal, it's just so much dead meat, boring as randomly-selected words on a page. Stravinsky, who was and is the trendsetter for musical modernism, knew there is no substitute for a good tune. Speaking of the oboe, which you did, I should mention that one interesting item in my collection is a pair of cassettes of various performances by Mitch Miller, signed by himself. They were a promo item during a fundraising drive by a nearby PBS station, and I couldn't resist getting them, since his classic performances aren't available now in any other format.

[Criticizing Chopin, Rod? Sacrilege, sir, sacrilege. Please show more restraint in the future, or you might just be faced with the censor's pen. Seriously, I've heard the criticism before, and I disagree. Someone (I forget who) said that one of Chopin's gifts was the ability to take that which was unique and to make it universal. You can take this whichever way you like, but that "saccharine" effect you describe may just be sentimentality, which is certainly about as universal as you can get. I do agree that sentimentality in large doses is something to be avoided, but then Chopin is not simply sentimental. In any case, his piano concerto nr. 1 is just about my favorite piece in all of classical music.]

Another big interest is, as you probably could already tell, music. Something I plan for future *Erehwons* will be some essays on the subject. I'm just beginning the process of changing my library over to the CD format, for which I've developed a great enthusiasm. I have about 40 CDs right now,

literature, running the gamut from Shakespeare to Slowacki, has postulated the existence of a "supreme being" which is helpless under certain circumstances. Without going so far as to label this as fatalism, I think that humans are in a way predisposed towards the idea of a stable course of events which must be followed, for good or ill, and which prevents a proliferation of the extremes of human experience, or at least dictates that such extremes will be balanced to some degree.

[Yes, I have seen your letters in Costa, and have found them fascinating. Don't worry about warning me about it—I'm anxious to hear more.]

Politics. I was generally pleased with the last election's results. My big worry was that our Senator Cranston, one of the most fundamentally sound intellects in the upper house, might not be re-elected. If the Democrats can now find a presidential candidate with a sound and dynamic personality and an upfront program which is coherent and positive, they'll have no trouble getting into the White House in '88. *[Let's hope so.]*

It's unfortunate that there is so much paranoia regarding the Russians. To some extent it's justified, since they represent an essentially statist and expansionist culture. The pity is, the paranoia has a fixation on the wrong thing. Russia would be a statist and expansionist culture regardless of its internal politics. Soviet foreign policy differs not so much as an iota from Tsarist foreign policy. And if the Mensheviks had come to power instead, or the Kadets, or the Social Democrats, it wouldn't have changed matters now in any significant way. The end result would have been a statist, elitist, repressive, and xenophobic regime, because Russian society for centuries has been statist, elitist, repressive, and xenophobic. I believe it's possible for this sickness to be healed, but its going to take a long time. Marxism is, after all, a basically humanist philosophy, and if we were smart, we would work toward bringing those elements to the foreground. Meanwhile, our focus on the wrong element in the Russian picture ties our hands in dealing with other nations. We got all paranoid about the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions, which could easily have been turned in different directions with enthusiastic support from Washington instead of reserved suspicion. The turn toward the USSR was in each case an outgrowth of the inevitable anti-American component in these revolutions—a component which we, unfortunately, richly deserve. That component expected us to react the way we did and, when we showed our paranoid colors, it took control. Even now it's not too late to recoup, although the process will be longer and more painful. The sad part is, we had better get our act together soon: Nicaraguan-style revolutions are going to happen, sooner or later, in most or all of the Latin American nations. These are native, not imported, revolutions, and they come from causes which are universally present from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego. The first "mene" is up on the wall; do we have to wait until the whole sentence is written? If we do, it may be too late to avert an even worse catastrophe: a hemispheric war between north and south.

[I fail to see how the West (a term which I intensely dislike, by the way) could ever succeed in bringing the "humanistic elements" of Russian society to the foreground. Marxism as a philosophy has very little to do with it, except perhaps as a weapon in Politburo power struggles (witness the battle between Khrushchev and the Stalinists during the Malenkov succession). The US does tend to act out of paranoia, but in many cases that paranoia is not entirely unfounded. I do agree, though, that US foreign policy is often very "culture-blind," and that is not something we can afford to continue with.]

Well, that seems to be enough blah-blah for the nonce. Looking forward to **BI #2**.

{5 January 1987}

BI #2 got here today. I must agree with you that it's beautiful, but lacking just a tad in the entertainment department. Not enough to get depressed over, and I hope you're not going to let obsessive perfectionism ride herd on you. If I were to advise anything it would be: lighten up! You need some more humor in the 'zine, and illos would help immensely! The map, by the way, looks quite good. Using letters to show ownership of units is the easy way, of course. I did that myself. But the most visually effective would be coloring in the units (e.g., symbols or patterns for the different Powers). That's more visually striking.

[Visually striking, perhaps, but very confusing, nonetheless. For example, the maps in Kaissa, while being extremely well done, suffer from what I think plagues all "pattern-oriented" designs—clutter. I had a very hard time putting together a picture of the map from there, preferring instead the simpler maps which show clearly what has transpired (such as in It's a Trap! and

and have a tentative future buying a program of 1 a month. I have many discs, and several cassettes which probably will never get replaced by a CD, which is a position most collectors will probably find themselves in. I have already developed some ideas about CD-buying which will form the basis of an "advice" essay in *Erehwon*.

[Being in the midst of a "stereo upgrade," as they call it, I'd love to hear your comments about CD's. I'm trying to buy a CD player right now, and I'm having a hell of a time finding one that suits my taste (although I am leaning towards a very nice Proton [830R] in the \$350-\$400 range). Buying the CD's themselves will be the difficult part. When I was buying LP's, it was very difficult to discover exactly what the best performances/recordings were before actually buying the records. I hope that this trial-and-error method won't repeat itself with my CD's.]

Since my B.A. and Ph.D. majors were history, I still retain a lot of interest in that field. I have accumulated a lot of data for a projected reference work (which over the years has taken several forms). The data base is a very thorough (it could never be "complete," I suppose) listing of independent and autonomous political units (republics, kingdoms, duchies, etc.), with their dates, rulers, and capital(s). You might be surprised how many thousand of these things there turn out to be/have been. This basic data is being linked now by a huge cross-index file by alternate names/spellings, plus names of the capitals. This file is complete for the Middle East and almost done for Africa (for which there's been a recent big expansion in the basic file, due to the big upsurge in scholarly interest in precolonial African political history). I have a small library to support this effort, but it's mostly a card file. My current plan is some sort of encyclopædic reference, but the problem of finding a publisher interested in anything so massive and detailed is possibly insurmountable. (My problem in writing is a lot like Schubert's: I've got all this wonderful stuff, but nobody wants to pay me for it.)

[This sounds like an interesting twist on the standard encyclopædia of history, of which there exist many examples but few actually good ones. The only publisher that I could ever see publishing this is a university press, as a commercial publishing house would have to commercialize it in order to make it sell (witness the atrocious Doubleday Anchor Atlas of World History, which is nice and distilled, as well as utterly useless from a scholarly point of view.)]

My biggest interest is, for want of a better term, cosmology. That is, understanding man's place in the universe. The basic question of cosmology is pattern: the pattern of the universe and the pattern of being on Earth. That there should be patterns is a trivial observation. There are certain agencies, such as gravity, which arise from the fundamental nature of space and time. Operating in a purely random universe, these agencies will produce patterns. The question is, are there patterns being produced by the operation of something beyond randomness? That's a hard question, since in a purely random universe almost anything is possible, even if it's of a low order of probability.

The orthodox Judaeo-Christian(-Islamic) and occultist answers to that question differ in detail, but basically they see a universe totally under the control of an all-encompassing intelligent agency. Fundamentalist/orthodox Christianity, for instance, accepts a transcendent omniscient/omnipotent God. This turns out to be logically impossible and manifestly nonoperative; the universe is much too random for that. Those who view the universe as purely random, the atheists for instance, often assume that by doing in the concept of an omnipotent/omniscient creator-god (a straw man, albeit one still widely believed in), they have made the case for pure randomness. Not so, say I. It's certainly possible to postulate a transcendent entity which has a more limited degree of perception and action. In a universe with at least ten physical dimensions and in which "empty space" is actually filled with a teeming froth of "virtual particles," something of the sort hardly seems unlikely.

There's no way to prove it, though. Nor is there any way to prove total randomness. If there's any way to determine an answer, it will lie in the gestalt of human experience. I would not expect an answer that was certain (in fact, it seems to me that uncertainty is an essential ingredient of the answer). Anyway, I've come to the conclusion that (hokey as it sounds) one human experience which is essential to getting at an answer is Jesus of Nazareth. The result has been a lot of research and the beginning of a novel (the uncertainty factor!) tentatively entitled *The Man* (although I *hate* titles that begin with "The"). I tend to get very talkative about this subject whenever there is the least encouragement (as you will see in *Costa*). So be warned....

[Ah yes, "cosmology." Your "randomness" approach is not an unexplored one: Descartes' Meditations dwell on this to a great degree. I think that the idea of a "transcendent entity" with more limited powers is a very plausible one, and one not unsupported by some basic human beliefs. Much

Europa Express). *Because of the way the mind works, the only way to make a truly striking and memorable map is to do it in color, with the colors corresponding to those in the game. Unfortunately, this is not really financially feasible.*]

Alas, I strongly disagree with your ruling (on the French order) in 1985AQ. I'm constantly amazed at the consistency of postal GM's in ignoring one of the most important passages in the Rulebook. Rule VII.4, last sentence: *A badly written order, which nevertheless can have only one meaning, must be followed.* I'm sure you'll agree that an order which omits the unit designation is "badly written." But it still admits of only one meaning. **Furthermore**, I refer you to the Sample Game, p. 10, Spring 1902, orders for Russia: Among others, these valid orders appear {the Rulebook doesn't use the abbreviations which are now standard}: A St. P. -Norway[,...] F Swe S St. P.-Norway. Note that the support order also omits unit designation. This format for support orders also appears in the English orders for the same season (but a French support *does* give unit designation). Similar omissions appear in F02. Therefore, [1] the badly-written order must be followed and [2] omitting the unit designation from a support order is not a badly-written order, since that format is sanctioned by the Rulebook. [By the way, omitting the unit designation from the move order itself would also be a "badly-written order"; and that, too, must be followed.] In my opinion, the GM is required to give the widest possible latitude by Rule VII.4. In my own HR's, I consider the order "badly-written" (and therefore allowable if otherwise unambiguous) if a player omits the unit designation, puts the wrong unit (A for F, F for A), or even puts down the wrong location for that unit. I do not believe the GM has the right to disrupt the orderly progress of the game (by disallowing a legitimate order) when a player has made a simple mistake.

[How, then, do you explain the fact that in your own houserules you required players to specify the nationality of foreign units which their own units were supporting? I take it that you would have disallowed "A Rum S A Bul-Ser" if the A Rum were Russian and the A Bul were Turkish. This is certainly not specified by the Rulebook, and is clearly demonstrated to be acceptable therein. Even if it were a "badly-written order," **it could only have one meaning**, and therefore would have to be followed. Apparently, you, too, have your limits as to what you will and will not accept, regardless of what the Rulebook says. My limits simply differ from yours.]

Music: Opera superscripts are the coming thing, obviously. We have them here in San Diego, also. The critics, of course, are generally elitist snobs who think everybody sits down and memorizes the libretto before the performance (or ought to, at any rate). I will grant that the superscripts aren't completely accurate. Often you can see some character sing several lines, and up above you get a translation, "Oh, hi there!" Well, nothing's perfect. But although I consider myself pretty knowledgeable in at least the basic repertoire, I appreciate the superscripts very much, as they enable me to get little bits of text I certainly wouldn't have remembered. Ms. Cassidy is right about having to look back and forth from superscript to stage, and this is inevitably on the annoying side. But if I didn't think it was worthwhile, I wouldn't do it. No, as usual, this conforms to the general rule familiar to all art fans: if the critics don't like it, it's a must-see!

Ah, I see. Now that I've told you that Penderecki is dullsville, you show your true colors ("fantastic"). *De gustibus non est disputandum*, eh? [I refuse to believe that it cannot be subjected to at least a little subjective analysis.] I don't dispute his musical talents, which evidently are considerable. But of course the critics **like** him, which is a good indication of his effect on the general public. My guess he's another of those chaps, like Hindemith, who writes music for the professionals and the cogniscenti, but usually fails to strike any empathetic chord in a more general audience. One never knows what may happen in the future, of course, but I suspect that a century from now you'll be able to find very little of his music out and about.

[Perhaps. Or perhaps he'll be revered as the greatest composer of the twentieth century. We'll see.]

Speaking of offbeat composers, you may want to look into Eduard Tubin (1905-1982). On the strength of having heard something I enjoyed, I decided to buy a couple of CD's of his music [the BIS recordings of Symphonies 2&6 and 4&9 conducted by Järvi]. I'm very impressed with this man's music. It generally isn't music you can cuddle up to, because it is very earnest and serious, and the idiom isn't easily approachable (but by no means atonal, and certainly not dull). Of these, the 4th Symphony is an amazing feat of sustained melodic lyricism—wholly unlike the other three works on these discs. It's already joined my favorite modern symphonies: Prokofiev's 7th, Vaughan Williams' 8th, Randal Thompson's 2nd, Prokofiev's 5th, Shostakovich's 1st, etc. The pairing, the 9th, is a

strange work in two adagio movements, and there is also his 1937 Tocatta, an exhilarating piece well worth having. I don't know yet what to make of the 9th, but it's not repulsive, anyway. (Tubín wrote ten symphonies.) He's Estonian, by the way, having fled his country in advance of the Soviet conquest of 1944-45. He then resided in Sweden. Interestingly the program notes are in English, French, German, Swedish,... and Estonian! (Well, maybe Finnish. One of 'em, anyway.) The 2nd and 6th Symphonies are very hard and rocky, but I believe they can be got at. If you like Arnold Bax, you'll find Tubín irresistible. I've also just picked up Stenhammar's 2nd, which is rather more conventional, but very, very good. Speaking of Bax, his "Springfire" Symphony is now on disc, but I've not bought it yet. Heard it broadcast, and it's easily the most approachable and beautiful of his larger works that I've heard thus far. I'm anxious to acquire it.

[Funny you should mention this. I, in fact, own one Tubín LP (the BIS recording of the Violin concerto nr.1/Suite on Estonian dances for violin & orchestra/Prelude sonnet, conducted by Järvi). Interesting music, I'll admit. I'll reserve judgment for now, though, until I hear more. Tubín might be one of the first acquisitions for my CD collection.]

Your discussion with Gary about Poland reminds me that I have one hobby I didn't mention before. Well, I guess I did; my file on rulers and so on. If I can find a copy of it, I'll have to send you a partially tongue-in-cheek item I once did on the rulers of Pomerania, entitled "Where Have All the Barnims Gone?" Pomeranians aren't quite Poles, I suppose, but close enough (and, of course, Poland finally got Pomerania back)... but my interest in history tends to flag after WWI.

[I'd love to read your piece on Pomerania. If you can dig it up, I'd be grateful.]

By the way, I agree with Steve Langley about the "hold and support" nonsense. I wrote some detailed articles in **VOD** on this subject. Probably you've seen those. Without going into detail, it seems to me that interpreting this as "double-ordering" is a distinction altogether more precious than is required by the Rules and/or by the general needs of a GM. If you haven't read my deathless prose on the subject (and Bruce Linsey's typically irrelevant replies), you might see if he'll xerox copies. I would, if I could find them. You have no idea of the problem I have with this office: cramming 2400 cubic feet of crap into 1600 cubic feet of space....

And I actually think that's it for now. One more thing. I expect you may have a taste for poetry. Then again, I may be wrong; you may be much too sensible. Anyway, I write the stuff (or did, before I became totally disgusted with the market). I'm enclosing a copy of my book (of which a couple of hundred copies are mouldering in the closet), just in case you might like it. I have written very little since. I may have a xerox or two of a couple of worthwhile items enclosed as well. If the book isn't of interest, you can always donate it to the college library. I can use a little immortality wherever it strikes....

[As I said before, my interest in poetry is limited. I can, however, sincerely say that I enjoyed what you sent. The off-color limericks just weren't my style, but some other selections were really intriguing. You might try sending a few of those limericks to Praxis, though. I hear that Stewart is just dying for some more stuff like that.]

MORE ZINES!

Penguin Dip is a new 'zine which tries to go a little way towards re-integrating *Diplomacy* with its origins in science fiction/fantasy fandom by providing reviews of science fiction books and original artwork along with subscriber participation. **PD** #1 arrived in my mailbox today, and I can safely say that it is on its way towards fulfilling that goal. Its publisher, Stephen Dorneman, has started out small, with a few letters, two book reviews, an article by Kathy Byrne, and a gamestart. The concept (centered around penguins) is great, and I especially like the name of the editorial section "From the Floe". In any case, PD looks like it's going to depend on reader support, so I urge anyone with artistic inclination to get in touch with Stephen at 95 Federal Street #2, Lynn, MA 01905. Six dollars get you ten issues. There are still game openings, I believe, for \$3.

RULES FOR POSTAL CIVILIZATION

1. Except where specified, the Avalon Hill rules will apply.
2. Postal play will be resolved in two stages, as follows:

STAGE I: AST Alteration (for the previous turn)
Taxation/City Revolt
Population Expansion
Census
Ship Construction/Supply/Removal
Movement
Conflict
City Building
Surplus Population Removal/Unsupported City Reduction
Trade Card Acquisition/Gold Buying

STAGE II: Trade
Civilization Card Acquisition/Excess Trade Card Return
Calamity Resolution/Unsupported City Reduction

3. In Stage I, players should submit orders for all actions which are not "automatic"; conditional orders are allowed. Unless ordered otherwise, city reduction will be done at city sites where the greatest number of tokens would replace the city, with ties resolved randomly.
4. In Stage II, trades will become effective as soon as the GM receives the appropriate information from the two players involved. The GM will mail confirmation cards to the players if they desire—send a self-addressed stamped postcard. *Players should submit conditional Civilization Card Acquisition orders, excess trade card return orders, and calamity resolution orders for all calamities they are aware of at that time prior to the deadline.* The GM will then publish trade results, Civilization Card purchases, and calamity resolution as well as the first steps of the next turn. Trading is done by the players by telephone/mail before the deadline.
5. Movement orders should be written utilizing the map printed herein, using the abbreviation T (token) and S (ship).
6. Calamity resolution will be handled as follows:
 - a. **Volcanic Eruption/Earthquake.** The affected player should submit orders if there is a choice involved (i.e., which volcano/city).
 - b. **Famine.** The affected player should submit orders for his own token removal, and indicate which other players are affected and by how many units; the GM will resolve the token removal for the other players unless he has conditional orders from the covering the situation.
 - c. **Civil War.** The affected player should submit orders as to which 35 units (or otherwise modified by Civ Cards) will comprise the first faction, and also declare which faction he will play; the other faction will automatically go to the player with the most tokens in stock.
 - d. **Flood.** The affected player should submit orders for token removal, and also allocate the additional ten units if necessary; the GM will resolve token removal unless guided by conditional orders.
 - e. **Epidemic.** If the affected player already knows about getting the epidemic in trade (i.e., through a confirmation card), he may submit orders for token removal as well as allocate the remaining 25 units; if no such orders are received, the GM will resolve the token removal, and will assess all other non-immune players equally with any extras being assessed to players chosen at random. The GM will choose which tokens are to be removed, unless guided by conditional orders.
 - f. **Civil Disorder.** If the affected player knows about getting the card in trade, he may submit orders for City Reduction. Otherwise, the GM will decide which cities are to be reduced.
 - g. **Iconoclasm & Heresy.** If the affected player already knows about this, he may submit city reduction (both for himself and others). No orders means the GM does it.
 - h. **Piracy.** The player who traded the card to the affected player should submit orders as to which cities are wrecked.

Remember: no player may be the *direct* recipient of more than two calamities in the same round, though any number of *indirect* calamities (received by other players) may also end up affecting him.

8. No player may lose units as a result of a calamity which would bring his total strength down below 15; once a minimum value of 15 units is reached, no other calamities will affect that player.

